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TO

THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

BY

E. A. Meredith, Esq.

# FALLACIES
OF
# RACE THEORIES

To the University of Toronto
with the Editor's Compliments.

# FALLACIES

OF

# RACE THEORIES

AS APPLIED TO

## NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

ESSAYS
BY
WILLIAM DALTON BABINGTON, M.A.

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# PREFACE

FRAGMENTS are generally unsatisfactory. They are unjust to the hand that can write no more, for they are incomplete pictures of the author's views. They cannot be fully appreciated by the general reader, for he thinks he has a right to expect that none but finished pictures should be placed before the public for inspection.

Yet there are many unfinished sketches, both in art and literature, which it would be a public loss to wholly shut up from view. In these pages there seems to me much that is not only interesting and instructive, but suggestive of novel thoughts, and likely to stimulate progressive study in the same direction ; and they certainly contain a good deal of neglected truth.

To the collection of a great mass of historical materials my friend Wm. D. Babington gave years of earnest, learned, and most honest labour. His unexpected death in 1893 prevented him from reducing these to order and system. That is a want that cannot now be adequately supplied by any other hand. Still,

in what he has left consigned to my care the style is lucid and the ideas are clear, and the scope of the work makes itself sufficiently apparent.

He contends that the mental and moral characteristics which distinguish groups of men, called nations, are mainly the results of the circumstances in which they have been placed and trained, their 'environment,' and that along with this they grow and change, gradually taking 'the form and pressure' of the influences acting on them.

He denies the popular 'Theory of Race,' which makes the present qualities of groups of men almost wholly dependent on those of their ancestors long centuries before, and which are supposed to have been transmitted by heredity, down to this generation, from the remote past.

It should be observed, however, that he does not enter at all, in these Essays, into the very different question how far merely physical peculiarities are transmitted.

To treat such large questions with scientific completeness, it would have been desirable to review the progress and changing phases of all the principal nations of whose civilisation we have reliable history.

This, unhappily, he did not live to fully accomplish; but the design explains his entering in many cases into minute details. These sometimes appear redundant in what is now only an unfinished abstract; but they would have been perfectly fitting in a completed and

larger treatise, where all such topics would have been amply dealt with.

In their present state such episodes have an interest of their own, and tend to illustrate characteristics of nations and of epochs.

Mr. Babington's private friends lament his loss for the many fine qualities which endeared him to them. The public too may, from these specimens, see reason to regret that he did not live to give them the finished benefit of his learning and ability.

I wish to acknowledge most cordially the assistance and encouragement received from his friend, Mr. Arthur J. Booth, in preserving this fragment of his work.

HERCULES H. GRAVES MACDONNELL.

ROBY PLACE, KINGSTOWN :
*May* 1895.

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# ESSAY I.

# INTRODUCTORY.

## ON WHAT ARE TERMED NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS. SUCH ARE VARIABLE AND ACQUIRED, RATHER THAN INHERITED.

# NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

To judge truly of the character of an individual, living or dead, is one of the most difficult tasks a man can attempt. But those who might be expected to feel and admit that difficulty seem to have no such hesitation in pronouncing very definite decisions on the mental or moral qualities of nations, either of present or of past times.

It is difficult to understand the reason for this confidence. Can any one imagine that it is easier to ascertain the exact character of a group containing millions than that of any one of the individuals of which that group is composed?

Where, for example, is the student of English character to study his subject—in the Houses of Parliament or in our convict prisons, among the opulent or easy members of the middle classes or among the people described in Mr. Sims's painful little book, 'How the Poor live'?

Not only is the problem to be solved by the investigator of national character rendered difficult by the great and ever-increasing complexity of modern life, but the observer himself is, especially in such questions, liable to have his judgment warped both by the bias of patriotism and by preconceived notions.

People habitually see what exists in their mind, rather than what actually lies before their eyes.

Novels, plays, character-sketches, and all manner of caricatures supply ample materials, so that each of us has gradually formed his mental gallery, in which are duly ranged and labelled effigies—like waxworks—of the Englishman, the Scotchman, the Irishman, the Frenchman, the German, and so on ; a goodly number occupying 'the chamber of horrors.' These figures are our types of the different nations, or races as we prefer to call them. Our own nation, whatever it may be, usually occupies the first place, as it is quite manifest that *ours* is always the chosen race.

These national types, in which we are apt to believe with such simple faith, would be a curious study. One writer points out what a kindly person the Englishman is, how brave and wise, how steadfast and true, how prudent and pious. A French writer will very probably hold quite another view of *perfide Albion.* The Irish patriot seems to think the Saxon so bad, that the sooner he reaches the perdition to which he is hurrying the better for everybody.

Germans in the same way have formed for themselves the mental conception of 'the German,' whose qualities they are wont to emphasise, as Herr Hellwald points out, by speaking of 'German' daring, 'German' patience, 'German' diligence, &c.[1] The assumption that the pre-eminent human virtues are in some sort a monopoly of the German, implied by the constant use of such phrases as the above, is very properly censured

[1] Stanford, *Compendium of Geography and Travel:* 'Europe,' p. 359.

as a weakness of his fellow-countrymen by Professor Hellwald; but the apparent implication that this failing is in any sense peculiar to Germans is manifestly unfair.

As may be expected, the French as a rule do not agree in the high estimate the Germans have formed of 'the German.' M. Guizot drew up an elaborate parallel between the early Germans and the North American savages; and the learned M. Guérard drew from his ancient chronicles a singularly unpleasant representation of the mediæval Teuton.

As to the French, German writers commonly have no hesitation in expressing a highly unfavourable opinion.

It is easy to see how these national types came into being. Contemporary sketches of life and character supply the groundwork; and historical students, reading the present into the past, selecting the letters they want to spell out the required words, and saying nothing about those which do not suit their purpose, supply the rest. This process of selecting texts is not adopted necessarily, or for the most part, with any intention to deceive. It can be pursued with perfect good faith: having a preconceived notion in his head, the student naturally notes what agrees with and confirms that notion, and rejects other evidence.

There would seem to be a survival of Nominalism in the way these national types present themselves to our minds. 'The' German or 'the' Englishman is obviously nothing but a verbal abstraction from the term German or Englishman, and as such has no real existence. Still, as we habitually speak of '*the* English-

man,' and assign such and such modes of thought and action to him, favourable or unfavourable according to our standpoint, it is hard not to suspect that there exists in our minds some lurking belief in the reality of the personality we talk of. When Mr. Froude fills his eloquent pages with descriptions of the imperfections and shortcomings of 'the Celt,' he seems to have an unaffected belief in the literary Mrs. Harris evolved by his powerful imagination. Even Professor Freeman indulges in some very doubtful metaphysics when dealing with this subject. In his essay 'Race and Language'[1] he explains the ultimate fact on which rests the assumed common character of the members of each nation or race as follows :—

'There is in each nation, in each race, a dominant element, or rather something more than an element, something which is the true essence of the race or nation, something which sets its standard and determines its character, something which draws to itself and assimilates to itself all the other elements.' This is Locke's 'Very Being of anything, whereby it is what it is,' or the Real Essence of the Schoolmen. If a nation can be truly said to possess a character in any intelligible sense, it must be made to rest on something more tangible than exploded metaphysics.

Some hazy notion that these phrases are too absolute frequently induces us to qualify them, and so we speak of 'the average Englishman.' We hardly bring home to our minds the great difference which exists between the different classes of society.

[1] *Contemporary Review*, March 1877.

Although the extreme heterogeneity of all modern societies negatives the notion of any common type of character among their members, the observation of the customs and beliefs, present and past, in different nations and classes forming nations is of the greatest importance; not certainly as proving inherent qualities in the nations, but because the study of such phenomena shows that they are the expression of thoughts, feelings and necessities common to all mankind, only modified by the degree of civilisation and other circumstances in which each community is placed.

If any one wished to frame an indictment against the early Germanic peoples he might point to some very ugly facts, and make a very disparaging estimate of Teutonic character from them. Thus, the German tribes were deeply stained by the crimes of infanticide and the murder of the aged and feeble. The 'family clubs,' clumsy wooden bludgeons, with which the old and hopelessly sick were put to death by their kinsfolk, are still to be seen in Swedish museums.[1] The Odin-ponds, into which the old warriors were forced to throw themselves, were common in every Teutonic land.[2] If the old man was unwilling to end his life, or his relatives did not end it for him, he had to drag out his remaining days in the degrading work of the field and the household, in company with women, slaves, and weak or cowardly persons.

Proceeding in this way it would be very easy to produce a silhouette of any required degree of blackness,

[1] Tylor, *Anthropology*, p. 411.

[2] Elton, *Origins of English Hist.*, 1890, p. 88.

but it would not be a true portrait. To represent such matters as characteristics indicating permanent moral defects in the race (so called) would be extremely foolish, if not absolutely dishonest. The same traits appear among the classical peoples in the early stages of their development. In Italy infanticide long continued, and in historic times remained, slightly veiled and modified, as the *ver sacrum*. The murder of the old is jocularly alluded to in a fragment of Varro's 'Man of Sixty': Marcus, a Roman Rip Van Winkle, roused from a sleep of fifty years to upbraid a later generation with its backslidings, is dragged off as a useless old man, and thrown into the Tiber (as the Odin pond) 'with a mock application of a primitive Roman custom.'[1]

All such habits—and the number of instances of them might be indefinitely increased—occur among peoples subjected to the privations of savages, and having the unrestrained instincts of savages. Sanctioned by custom and superstition, such usages linger on till swept away by advancing civilisation. Thus, common to all peoples at a certain stage of development, they can be characteristic of none. Tacitus, when he wrote his hearsay account of the manners of the Germans[2] (for there is not a shadow of proof that he ever personally visited Germany), was struck by matters which had belonged to the daily life of his own ancestors, and was led by these to consider that the Germans were a peculiar people with special endowments.

[1] Mommsen, vol. iv. p. 600.

[2] George Long, *Dict. of Classical Biog.*, article 'Tacitus.'

Nor can it be said that persistence in savage notions or practices is a proof of any innate peculiarity in a backward society. The masses of the poor in the enlightened England of the first half of the eighteenth century are described by Mr. Green as 'ignorant and brutal to a degree which it is hard to conceive.'[1] Swift wrote in 1737 of 'the savage old Irish, who are only the vulgar, and some gentlemen who live in the Irish parts of the kingdom.'[2] So, too, the Highlands of Scotland cannot assuredly be considered a civilised country till after the rebellion of 1745. But the causes which made these classes and districts unprogressive, and therefore barbarous, are sufficiently plain, and obviously lay in the circumstances surrounding each society, and not in special qualities of the 'race.'

There are two leading views as to the formation of individual character. One class of thinkers tells us that it is the result of the circumstances under which the infant, child, boy or man is brought up. Another class tells us that it depends on a certain innate bias derived from ancestors by what we call heredity. We use this word heredity and flatter ourselves that we understand what it means; but on examination we find the meaning by no means clear.[3] Two different sets of facts can be adduced to support these views. In some cases it seems almost immaterial how a boy is brought up. A Faraday will make his way upwards and leave his beneficent mark on the world, let his early sur-

[1] *Hist. of English People*, vol. iv. p. 121.
[2] Letter to Mr. Pope, July 23, 1737.
[3] See Max Müller, *Selected Essays*, vol. xi. p. 493.

roundings be ever so adverse. On the other hand, common experience tells us that very much indeed depends on the bringing up. Captain Fitzroy took home in the 'Beagle' a Fuegian infant, and had him reared as an Englishman in an English home. Mr. Darwin tells us that when grown up 'his intellect was good, and his disposition nice.'[1] If that infant had been left in Tierra del Fuego and had grown up there, can we doubt that he would have resembled the rest of his interesting fellow-countrymen? One may venture to state with some confidence that it is highly probable a child brought up among thieves will turn out a thief, and that one reared among sensible and honest folk is not likely to be conspicuously silly or criminal in after-life.

Common experience, then, suggests that educative influences, affecting men while their minds are plastic, are the main causes of difference in character, while yet in a few instances character seems to be to some extent independent of such influences. Such men, exceptional either for good or evil, are a puzzle. Formerly it was usual to refer their characters to planetary influences, and bygone science cast their horoscopes; now we refer to their ancestors, and modern science examines their pedigrees. Modern science is less whimsical than the old lore; but it has equally failed in explaining some patent facts, and the principle of heredity, at least in the shape it wears in the philosophy of history as the theory of races, is highly and

[1] Max Müller, *Nineteenth Century*, January 1885. Fitzroy's *Narrative*, 1839, iii. 226.

mischievously misleading. However, what concerns us here is that as the individual is held to owe his character to his ancestors, the aggregate of individuals—the nation—is supposed to owe its assumed character to that of its ancestors. If the nation derive its qualities from antecedent and remote causes, if the something which sets its standard and determines its character is a something that is long buried, surely nations ought to hold steadily to their characters, or at least they should change very slowly.

If we take immutability as a test, there is no truth in the ancestral theory of national characters. Popular modes of thought and feeling change utterly and completely, and frequently with great rapidity. 'How deeply is the love of royalty ingrained in the French nature,' might many an observer of Frenchmen have said, as he watched the enthusiastic crowds almost worshipping their youthful and amiable king; in a few brief years the head of the popular idol was severed from his body in the Place de la Révolution amid the yells of the same people.

If there be any meaning in the expression at all, the character of the nation means the character of the majority; and who shall describe that varying character? Professor Max Müller sums up the teaching of history on this point in a sentence. 'Like the individual, a whole family, tribe, or race of men may in a very short time rise to the highest pitch of virtue and culture, and in the next generation sink to the lowest level of vice and brutality.'[1]

[1] *Nineteenth Century* article quoted above, p. 118.

The instability of national characteristics ought to warn us that a fixed national portrait is a vain thing, and that all theories which derive these changing phenomena from an unchanging cause are utterly baseless.

# ESSAY II.

## THE HISTORY OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE VIEWED IN RELATION TO THE RACE THEORIES.

## CHAPTER I.

### WAS THE EMPIRE BEFORE ITS FALL 'SUNK IN HOPELESS DECAY'?

THAT which seems to me the main source or origin of the race theory is the view which German patriotism, aided by other influences, has persuaded most modern historians to take as to the dominant part played by the Teutonic race in history. This pretension, therefore, I shall proceed to examine.

The great historical event we owe to the Germans is the overthrow of the Empire of the West. The view now taken of this revolution is extremely different from that usual in the last century. Writers of that period cast a regretful glance at the civilisation of Ancient Rome, while mediæval barbarism filled them with a feeling of contemptuous aversion. The contrary view is now generally entertained. The Germans, who assume to be our teachers in history as in everything else, make the cause of their ancestors a personal one, ransack all the writers of antiquity to prove the virtue of the Teutons, and the vices of the Romans; from these latter, they tell us, nothing saved modern society but the total destruction of the old order and the rule of the virtuous

barbarians. What measure of liberty and virtue non-Teutonic nations now possess is due to the infusion of German blood and to German institutions, which this great historical event conferred on modern Europe.

This notion, which makes the barbarians the divinely appointed purifiers of a worn-out society, sunk in debauchery and slavish vice, and which represents these youthful heroes as transmitting to their descendants certain moral elements wanting in the civilisation of the ancient world, has become almost axiomatic in the philosophy of history. The great Italian historian Cesare Cantu tells us that the Christians saw in the Gothic invasion an expansion of the rights of man, a much-needed revival of youth ; and in the severe trials of Rome a just retribution for its sanguinary crimes—a view with which this illustrious writer himself agrees.[1] M. de Montalembert attributed to the barbarians the re-introduction of love of liberty and honour, which he said were wanting in the Roman world since the foundation of the Empire.[2] Guizot held that the contribution brought by the Germans towards the formation of our modern world was the spirit of individual liberty.[3] M. Marius Sepet, in an able essay published in the ultramontane 'Revue des Questions Historiques,' tells us that the Germans brought into the modern world religious idealism, to rescue it from the positivism of

[1] Cantu, Paris, 1859, vol. iii. p. 467.

[2] 'La liberté et l'honneur ! Voilà ce qui manquait à Rome et au monde depuis Auguste. Voilà ce que nous devons à nos ancêtres les Barbares !' (*Les Moines d'Occident*, vol. i. p. 34.)

[3] Guizot, *Civilisation*, vol. i. p. 433.

Rome.[1] In the intellectual faculties M. Sepet credits the barbarians with 'une imagination féconde, un tempérament poétique.' The poetical talents of the Germans rejuvenated the decayed abilities of the Gallo-Romans, and from them spread to the rest of Europe. In addition to these great benefits, according to M. Sepet, we also owe 'the magnificent ideal' of the great period of the middle ages, chivalry itself, to the Germans and their 'beautiful institution,' the *comitatus* (*compagnonnage*).

Though M. Sepet rejects the notion of the Germans of our day, who are disposed to believe that the ancient Germans were perfect models of all the virtues, he makes a vigorous effort himself to set up the hypothesis. Nor is it hard to see the reason. An enthusiastic supporter of the theocratic pretensions of the mediæval Church, he sees very clearly that the destruction of the imperial was necessary to make room for the papal power. The classical world was dominated by the sense of the supremacy of law.[2] The Germans overthrew that law and introduced an archaic chaos, in which the Church was the sole surviving institution of the ancient order, or rather the first to revive after the tide of barbarism had devastated the civilised world. It had an opportunity of becoming, perhaps was forced to become, the founder and leader of a new civilisation. For a comparatively short space of

[1] 'L'instinct idéaliste, voilà dans le religieux et le moral ce que les Germains apportaient aux populations romaines que l'Eglise n'avait pu soustraire qu'à demi au joug écrasant du matérialisme, ou, pour tout dire, du *positivisme* romain' (*Revue des Questions Hist.* vol. vi. p. 252).

[2] 'Ce culte idolâtrique de l'autorité légale, qui faisait des anciens Grecs et des vieux Romains les esclaves de la République' (*Ibid.* p. 247

time the great dream of a theocracy seemed almost realised, and its partial realisation was due to the work of the barbarians. Without the Germanic conquest the world would have never seen the theocracy which exercised a real sway in Europe from the pontificate of Gregory VII. to that of Boniface VIII.; and this service induces ultramontane writers to echo the boastful self-conceit of the Germans. The memory of these two centuries and a half is very dear to the clerical school. An enthusiastic writer in the 'Dublin Review' exclaims, 'The Kingdom of Christ ruled over all, and His vicars used their two-edged sword to impose the fetters of charity, and the manacles of the divine law.' Another tells us that the middle ages may be said to differ from earlier and later ages in having witnessed—for too short a time indeed, and in too poor a way, but still for some time and in some way, which might also have been longer had it not been for man's perversity—the temporal reign of Christ and His Church on the earth, as distinguished from their spiritual reign.[1]

In addition to the favourable view of what I may call the 'Teutonic theory of the fall of the Empire' due to prepossessions as to papal temporal power, there is another reason influencing clerical writers to look askance at early Christian Imperialism. Constantine and his immediate successors did not abandon the title of Pontifex Maximus, and the idea of their spiritual authority seemed to haunt the Emperors down to the days of Leo the Isaurian, a rough illiterate peasant soldier, who claimed the obedience of Pope Gregory II.

[1] *Dublin Review*, 2nd ser. vol. xix. p. 334.

on the ground of his being both high priest and Emperor, ὅτι βασιλεὺς καὶ ἱερεύς εἰμι.[1] It is certain that the Church vigorously repudiated this assumption from the first,[2] and no less certain that it obeyed the imperial civil power so long as a shadow of that power remained. Now the fall of the Empire not only made way for the assumption of temporal power by the Church, but it put an end to the ever increasing claim of the civil power to the decision of purely ecclesiastical questions. The work of the Teutons having been so favourable to clerical rule, both spiritual and temporal, it is not wonderful that ultramontane writers vie with the Germans themselves in zealously upholding the Teutonic theory. To them the barbarians appear as a virtuous and youthful race whose mission it was to destroy a worn out and utterly corrupt régime, that stood in the way of the spiritual and temporal advancement of the Church.

Another class of writers can hardly bring themselves to acknowledge the great advance in social freedom which the world owes to the Roman Empire. Imperialism is so justly hateful to the lover of liberty in

[1] Gregorovius, *Geschichte der Stadt Rom*, vol. ii. p. 225.

[2] A letter of the venerable Bishop Hosius, who suffered in the last pagan persecution, is preserved in the works of St. Athanasius; it winds up an argument on this point with the words 'so we are not permitted to govern the empire of the world, and you, sir, have no power at all in things that are sacred' (Dupin, *Eccles. Writers*, vol. i. p. 177). This was written to the Emperor Constantius. Again, St. Ambrose said of the Emperor Valentinian, 'It is an honour to him to be of the Church—he is in the Church, but not above the Church' (*Ibid.* vol. i. p. 290). Dean Milman must have overlooked these and other plain utterances when he wrote that Pope Gelasius was the first to express the supremacy of the Church in all religious matters. From the time of Gelasius, however (A.D. 492), the matter is beyond cavil (*Latin Christianity*, vol. i. p. 321).

the present day, that he is led to forget what the Empire then meant to the Roman provincials. It meant to them release from a harsh form of oligarchical oppression, and was everywhere hailed as an emancipation. So great was the enthusiasm for the Empire that, in pagan times, the worship of the Emperor appears a natural result. The Augustus was to the Roman citizen, and especially to the provincial, the embodiment of the State, a kind of visible emblem of the Deity. The curious and significant fact that the living Emperor was worshipped, and that the cult was general in the provinces, has not been sufficiently noticed. M. Fustel de Coulanges puts this matter in the clearest light in his great work, 'Histoire des Institutions politiques de l'Ancienne France.' The provincials worshipped the Emperor because they saw in him a deliverer. Forgetful of these considerations, and applying the ideas of the nineteenth century to the fifth, writers of the liberal school are scarcely able to do justice to the Empire, and are apt to applaud the work of the barbarians in effecting its overthrow ; they do not sufficiently consider the loss which freedom sustained by the abolition of rational law, and by the substitution of primitive forms of arbitrary personal rule—an inevitable result of the recurrence to an archaic type of society.

Yet another group of writers are carried away by an admiration for the ages of chivalry. In their pages mediæval history is a brilliant romance, as pleasing and as untrue as any that was written by Sir Walter Scott.

A theory that is supported by ardent patriotism, as well as by religious and political prepossessions, is very

easily established. The following statements therefore have received almost universal assent.

1. That the Roman Empire was sunk in hopeless moral decay.

2. That the barbaric conquest was necessary to rejuvenate this decrepit world, and that it did so rejuvenate it.

3. That the Germans were a people specially endowed for this work, and that the modern world owes its liberty to the fortunate development of these Teutonic virtues, the inalienable birthright of that favoured race.

All these propositions seem so firmly established in popular literature, that it may appear almost hopeless to expect a reconsideration of such 'first principles.' Nor would I ask the reader to examine the plain facts by the dry light of common-sense, were it not that this Teutonic theory is the main prop on which rests the general race theory with all its manifold evil consequences.

First, let us inquire, was Roman society at the close of the Empire really sunk into hopeless moral decrepitude?

M. Fustel de Coulanges emphatically warns his readers when he writes:[1] 'To say that the Roman Empire perished in consequence of its corruption is to utter one of those senseless phrases, which are injurious alike to the progress of historic science, and to the knowledge of human nature.'

Germans, even so great a writer as Gregorovius,

[1] *Institutions politiques de l'Ancienne France*, p. 280.

accept the retributive theory, and lose no opportunity of pointing the moral by an ample picture of Roman depravity. To aid him in drawing up an account of life in the city of Rome at the date of its sack by Alaric, Gregorovius can find no materials except some passages from Ammianus Marcellinus, describing the Roman society of a generation before the Gothic victory, and a few scattered notices in the writings of St. Jerome. It is unfortunate for the good fame of Roman society of the period that the only accounts of it extant are to be found in a hasty sketch by a rough soldier, who affected the cynic philosopher, and in the strictures of a saint devoted to a rigorous asceticism. The life of London of the present day would fare but ill if its character were left to be inferred by the future historian from stray passages, say, in the works of Carlyle and of Cardinal Manning. Ammianus shows us the wealthy Roman in his luxurious house decorated with pictures and mosaics; he points with scorn to his expensive dress, and notes the pompous names which conceal a humble origin—Reburrus, Favonius, and so forth. The satirist tells us that, though 'hating literature like poison,' his friend Reburrus will pore over Juvenal and the Chronique Scandaleuse of Marius Maximus. Reburrus prefers the company of jesters and gamblers to that of philosophers; he loves to listen to music, and at the theatre is a great patron of the ballet. The Roman lordling gives luxurious dinners, and is fond of yachting in the summer along the southern coast of Italy. It is noted as a crime that he uses an umbrella to keep off the rays of the sun, and employs beaters in hunting large game.

There is a terrible excitement about the sporting events of the day, the chariot races in the Circus Maximus and the like. This madness extends to the lower classes. True, the old gladiatorial shows are at an end; this perhaps may be accounted a degeneracy, but what remains excites the populace. This is all bad enough; still, change the names, the time, and place, and might not an ill-natured critic still tell much the same tale of wealthy fools in the civilised society of any great capital?

St. Jerome deals with religious life; his principal picture represents a Roman matron—the rich widow of Reburrus, we may say; the noble dame is seated with her cheeks carefully rouged, and holding a splendidly bound copy of the Gospels in her hands; her magnificent salon is filled with morning visitors, telling her ladyship the latest scandals. She is besieged by ecclesiastical personages, collecting subscriptions—from the daintily dressed deacon admitted to the salon, down to the dirty monks whom the servants are driving from the porch. It is simply the familiar picture of a rich worldly woman, turned devotee in her old age. Both satirical pictures portray a life of vulgar display and silly ostentation rather than of more positive vice.

The common people are severely treated by Ammianus. He described them as thinking only of wine, dice, brothels and plays. There was a growing indifference to affairs of State; the Senate was deserted. As the Empire declined and its fall became inevitable, with the barbarians at the door, a kind of reckless feeling grew apace: 'let us eat, drink, and be merry,

for to-morrow we die.' In every desperate condition of society the same phenomenon is seen; at no time did trivial amusements more occupy men's minds than during the terrible scenes of the revolutionary Terror. Defoe, probably with truth, represents ill-omened mirth as common in the worst times of the plague. Gregorovius tells us how St. Augustine wrung his hands to see the beggared Romans in their wretched exile at Carthage; men, but recently escaped from the sack of Rome, crowding into the theatres and hotly disputing about the merits of rival players. That the majority of men should seek and find relief from present misery in such trifling may be a subject for scornful pity; but such weakness by no means proves hopeless moral degeneracy in the people that exhibited it, for it is too common a trait of all humanity. That a people, particularly the upper classes among them, should cease to take an interest in public affairs is a much more serious proof of moral decline. Gregorovius attributes the fall of Rome to indifference to politics.[1] 'Die Römer, die sich einst zur höchsten staatlichen und bürgerlichen Kraft erhoben hatten, welcher ein Volk überhaupt fähig sein kann, traten in eine Epoche tiefer Gleichgültigkeit gegen das Staatliche, und dies war der Untergang Roms.'

It is necessary to consider how far this charge is borne out by the very scanty evidence before us. We must first take into account the constitution and position of the Roman Senate. 'The constitution (of the Senate) was not unlike that of the House of Lords, being composed of men of high birth, great wealth, and

[1] Vol. i. p. 133.

eminent public services.'[1] Such a body is necessarily conservative, and in a progressive society must sooner or later find itself in hopeless opposition to popular opinion. Twenty-six years before the sack of Rome we see the senators engaged in a vain strife against the change of thought. Rome had become Christian, the senators for the most part remained pagans, or were somewhat in the position of Agnostics in the present day. Symmachus, in the name of the Senate, demanded the re-establishment of the altar of Victory in the Chamber, and also, that which the maintenance of that altar symbolised, the toleration of pagan worship. His main argument was the familiar one, the advantage of supporting ancient traditions and usages consecrated by the authority of centuries. The result was not for a moment doubtful, notwithstanding the eloquence and exalted position of the petitioner.

An assembly which finds its dearest wishes derided, its counsels scornfully rejected, can scarcely hope to retain the respect even of its own members ; so it would not be wonderful if a zealous discharge of senatorial functions ceased to be so characteristic of the order as it had been in past times. But the senators, the nobility of Rome, continued to produce great statesmen and officials by no means devoid of public spirit. Symmachus left his vast wealth and ancient name to a descendant, who a century afterwards supported the traditions of his house, and who, as well as his illustrious son-in-law Boethius, fell a victim to the tyranny of Theodoric. The last representative of the great senators of Rome,

[1] Sir T. Erskine May, *Democracy in Europe*, vol. i. p. 213.

the learned and able Cassiodorus, long survived his friends, the younger Symmachus and Boethius, and after many years spent in a gallant struggle against barbarism, abandoned the public service of his country, and employed the remainder of an extraordinarily protracted life in literary work at the monastery of Viviers. As a statesman he could not save the institutions of his native land, so as a monk he strove to preserve its ancient literature. Nor is there any worthier name in Roman history than that of the brave Majorianus, an enlightened ruler and a skilful general.

It would be very easy to add to the list of eminent men whose virtues contradict this notion of the universal degeneracy of society. Among the hundred and thirty personages to whom the extant letters of the elder Symmachus are directed, we may feel sure that there were few, if any, of the type of Reburrus or Favonius. A man of ability and high position will hardly waste his time in keeping up an intercourse with fools. I venture to think that Gibbon, and Gregorovius who seems to follow him, have both gone beyond their text in assuming that Ammianus intended his picture of silly luxury as a representation of the general condition of the senators of Rome. The words with which the satire begins are to the effect that the splendour of the Senate is tarnished by the dissolute levity of a *few* of its members, unmindful of the place of their birth.[1] The exclusive spirit of the Roman nobles was doubtless very irritating to a foreigner like the Grecian Ammianus,

[1] 'Sed laeditur hic coetuum magnificus splendor levitate *paucorum* inconditâ, ubi nati sint, non reputantium, &c.' Am. Mar., lib. xiv. 6.

and he shows his anger when he compares the ancient kindliness towards strangers with the present contempt for all born outside the *pomoerium*. 'Nunc vero insanus flatus quorumdam vile esse, quidquid extra urbis pomoerium nascitur aestimavit.'[1] But Ammianus, though we can see plainly enough that he disliked the Romans, mentions with praise the names of certain senators, and gives one instance in which the temperate and dignified remonstrance of the Senate forced the furious Valentinian to undergo the humiliation of denying his own orders, on the occasion of the barbarous persecutions for witchcraft which he had renewed in his reign.

The evidence of Ammianus is insufficient to prove that the Roman nobles were sunk in luxurious folly. That the influence due to their wealth and ability was neutralised by their conservative adhesion to ancient beliefs is obvious enough. Praetextatus, an able and upright man who died in 385, Symmachus, who lived on into the fifth century, and the able statesman Sallust were pagans. The richest noble in Rome, the astute Sextus Anicius Probus, did not become a Christian till just before his death, about the beginning of the fifth century. This position of hostility to the opinions of their day, and consequent loss of influence, seems sufficient to account for much that is attributed to a degenerate disregard of public duties by the nobility of the dying Empire. The religious revolutions had disorganised society. Cantu notices this point. Every religious revolution injured the State; when Constantine hoisted the Labarum, when Julian reopened the temples

[1] Am. Mar. *loc. cit.*

of the gods, or when Jovian re-established Christian worship, the Empire lost the hands and minds of a host of men, estranged by intolerance, or by their dislike to the service of a prince whose faith differed from their own.[1]

The adherence of so many of the Roman nobles to expiring paganism must not be attributed to stupid ignorance, characteristic of mental decay, or even solely to the natural conservatism of a privileged class. Nor was it that clinging to exploded superstitions common to the ignorant in all ages; such as in the next century was found among the *pagani*, or peasants, and to which we owe the word pagan.

It must be borne in mind that there was much in the Christianity of the fifth century which repelled the man of culture. In that uncritical age the study of literature was fraught with perils to faith and morals, and as such was strongly denounced by the authoritative teachers of the Church. In the Apostolic Constitutions the Christian is ordered to refrain from all the writings of the heathens. 'If thou wilt explore history thou hast the Books of the Kings, or seekest thou for words of wisdom and eloquence thou hast the Prophets, Job, and the Book of Proverbs.'[2] The believer is exhorted to abstain scrupulously from 'all strange and devilish books.' Tertullian denounced the study of classical writers as a fertile source of paganism. At the close of the sixth century, Gregory the Great, in his often quoted letter to Desiderius, censured the Gallic bishop for

[1] Cantu, Paris, 1850, vol. iii. p. 464.

[2] J. B. Mullinger, *Schools of Charles the Great*, p. 8.

teaching grammar in his schools. It is almost needless to point out that the *grammatica*, the study of which the great Pope deprecated, was the first *art* of the Trivium,[1] and included the study of the pagan writers accessible in those days, and not merely what we now call grammar.[2]

Down to the time of Gregory, and long afterwards, paganism in some form was a constant source of danger to Christianity, and numerous authoritative warnings can be quoted pointing out the perils of classical studies. That earnest believers should fear such studies was inevitable in those days. Men did not then attribute the fables of mythology to 'diseases of language' or 'survivals of myths.' No one thought of Jupiter as the personification of the blue sky: to the heathen he was the father of gods and men; to the Christian, a demon of the pit, a fiend into whose clutches the unwary Christian might at any time fall. We may smile at the fear expressed by Erasmus that the revived study of the Grecian classics would lead to the restoration of the

[1] It may be noted that the whole course of a liberal education was divided into the 'seven arts' by the mediæval writers. These were the Trivium—grammar, logic, and rhetoric—forming the elementary course, the Quadrivium—arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy—forming the higher or scientific course. This division dates from the sixth century, and was still in use in the sixteenth, as Harrison, writing about the year 1586 of the condition of the English Universities, says: 'The Quadrivials—I mean arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy—are now small regarded in either of them.' It is somewhat surprising that Archbishop Trench, in his study of words, should suppose the Trivium to consist of grammar, arithmetic, and geometry, which spoils the division into literary and scientific subjects, obviously intended by the scheme.

[2] See Maitland, *Dark Ages*, p. 179; Mullinger, *Schools of Charles the Great*, Introduction, p. 12.

worship of the gods.[1] At the same time we should remember that the popularity of the writings of Pletho, the fifteenth-century polytheist, and the classical vagaries of the Florentine Academy and of other scholars of the Renaissance, lend some little plausibility to the notion. But assuredly the Christians of the early middle ages could not afford to laugh at the idea of a pagan revival, as men laughed in the last century at the Olympian theology of Mr. Thomas Taylor the Platonist. The natural fear and abhorrence of paganism generated in the minds of the Christians of the fourth and fifth centuries a pretty general hatred of studies which continued to delight the cultured portion of the Roman nobles. To the nobles, to become Christian seemed to involve giving up their familiar studies, to lose for ever the graceful fancies of the poets and the charms of oratory, philosophy, and history—a painful renunciation, which St. Jerome himself found no easy task. The Saint tells us how, after a night far spent in reading Cicero and Plautus, in a vision he was warned by a voice which said to him, 'Ciceronianus es, non Christianus; ubi enim thesaurus tuus, ibi est cor tuum.'[2] That many men such as Sallust, Praetextatus, and the elder Symmachus were unequal to this painful sacrifice is easily understood. Such men in the dying Empire continued to profess the religion of their contemporaries the poets Claudian, Ausonius, and Rutilius.[3]

[1] Disraeli, *Curiosities of Literature*, vol. i. p. 213.

[2] Mullinger, *op. cit.* p. 10.

[3] As Mr. Mullinger points out (*Schools of Charles the Great*, p. 10): 'Two contending theories (of education) are distinctly present in the Christian Church, from the days when Tertullian first denounced the

The Roman noble was, as a rule, highly educated. Ammianus speaks of want of knowledge as a disgrace to a man of high birth. What a complete contrast to the mediæval notion that 'to crepe fro knight-hode into clergie, Hit is no gentel-mannes game'! Describing the character of Orfitus, Prefect of Rome, the historian tells us that he was able and very skilful in forensic business, but less formed by the splendour of learning than became a nobleman.[1] To men of culture the attitude of the greater part of the Christians towards learning must have been in every way repulsive.

But this was not all; both as a rich man, and as a loyal citizen of the Empire, the noble would be likely to fear and dislike Christian doctrines. The early Christians held their funds in common, and their ample charity was so great that, according to Lucian, in a brief space they gave away all that they had [2] to relieve

ancient literature down to the days of Bossuet and Fénelon.' One party utterly condemned such studies, the other gave them a place in the instruction of Christian youth under certain limitations; sometimes one school of thought prevailed, sometimes the other. We can as reasonably blame a physician for altering his treatment—at one time ordering tonics, at another sedatives—as censure the Church for this change of front. In the lower Empire, when Christianity was contending with a literary and sceptical paganism, it was natural that the views of Tertullian should prevail; afterwards, when the Teutons had almost annihilated civilisation, the danger was that faith should perish for utter lack of knowledge; then we find the majority of clerics busy in founding the schools which have grown into Universities. To this manifestation of clerical activity we undoubtedly owe the preservation of classical learning, and the modern literature to which that learning gave birth.

[1] 'Vir quidem prudens, et forensium negotiorum oppido gnarus, sed splendore liberalium doctrinarum minus quam nobilem decuerat institutus' (Am. Mar. xiv. 6).

[2] Neander, *Church History*, vol. i. p. 221.

the distresses of the brethren. Such practices, although not amounting to actual communism, as Milman contends,[1] went too near to it not to be distasteful to the rich and worldly-minded. Again, the wealth on which the Roman noble so prided himself in a great degree consisted of property in slaves, and there was a fundamental antagonism between Christianity and the principles on which slavery was founded. When these points, exaggerated as they doubtless were by persons hostile to the faith like Lucian,[2] presented themselves to his mind, it is highly probable that the wealthy pagan looked at the Christian missionary with somewhat the same feeling with which a rich Virginian planter of thirty years ago would regard a teacher, who combined the doctrines of Proudhon on property with Garrison's views on the domestic question.

Again, the noble, if he was not a Reburrus, set great store on the due discharge of public offices, both civil and military; and his becoming a Christian made it difficult to gratify this ambition. As long as paganism continued, its rites were so blended with the official duties of the magistrates that it is difficult to see how a Christian could discharge them without sin. For this reason, perhaps, the Council of Illiberis in 305 ordered

[1] *History of Christianity*, vol. i. p. 357. It is certainly hard to see how such strong texts as Matt. xix. 21, Mark x. 21, Acts ii. 44, 45, iv. 32, should be without literal interpreters. On the communistic tendency of the early canon law, see Baring Gould, *Germany*, p. 401.

[2] Thus the pagan in Minucius Felix describes Christians as men who, themselves half naked, despise honours and the purple. 'Honores et purpuram despiciunt, ipsi semi-nudi' (Neander, *Church History*, vol. i. p. 375).

that the supreme magistrates of the municipal towns, the 'Duumviri municipales,' should not enter a church during their year of office.[1] Yet the duties of Duumvirs did not include that of passing sentence of death, the lawfulness of which was doubted by many Christians. Another duty was more clearly forbidden. One of the foulest blots on Roman law was that it prescribed the employment of judicial torture in certain cases. Torture was in every way repugnant to true Christian feeling, and as magistrates were compelled to order its infliction, the Synod of Rome in 384 declared that no Christian could exercise judicial power without sin. Pope St. Innocent I. pronounced, in 405, that Christians might exercise judicial functions, but only on the ground that the Church had no right to resist the laws, or to oppose the powers ordained of God.[2] Pope St. Innocent in this affirmed the decision of St. Ambrose.[3] It is not rash, however, to conclude that the party who thought, with Origen, that the duties of the civil magistracy were incompatible with the Christian profession were still pretty numerous. Christian magistrates seem early to have consulted their bishops on the proper discharge of their duties; and to this custom Neander attributes the moral superintendence over the conduct of magistrates which bishops eventually acquired.[4]

To military service the doctrine of a powerful party in the Church was much more unfavourable than to

[1] Neander, *Church History*, vol. iii. p. 200.
[2] Lea, *Superstition and Force*, p. 419.
[3] Fleury, *Hist. Ecc.* vol. v. p. 264.
[4] Neander, *Church History*, vol. p. 201.

judicial employment. Clemens of Alexandria, Tertullian, Lactantius, Origen, and Basil maintained that all warfare was unlawful for those who had been converted.[1] A council at Arles, on the other hand, condemned soldiers who deserted through religious motives; and St. Augustine used his great influence to sanction military service. But even where the calling was not regarded as positively sinful, it was strongly discouraged.[2] Thus the two careers which had always furnished occupation to the Roman patriciate, on which their rank was founded, and with which their sense of dignity and moral worth was inextricably involved, were both of them the subjects of suspicion, if not of absolute censure, to powerful schools of Christian thought. Common-sense rejected such impracticable doctrines; and thus the pagan apologists, using the customary artifice of disputants, assumed the controvertible doctrines to be legitimate deductions from the Gospel. 'Does not the Emperor punish you justly?' says Celsus; for, should all be like you, then there would be none to defend him; the rudest barbarians would make themselves masters of the world, and every trace as well of your own religion itself, as of true wisdom, would be obliterated from the human race.'[3] So in pagan times the Christians were held to be 'hostes Caesarum, hostes populi Romani,' and paganism, with its dying breath, inveighed against them as enemies of the State.[4]

[1] Lecky, *Hist. of Morals*, vol. ii. p. 248.

[2] Lecky, *op. cit.* vol. ii. p. 249.

[3] Neander, *Church History*, vol. i. p. 126.

[4] M. Sepet speaks of 'ces rhéteurs, derniers défenseurs du polythéisme expirant, qui accusaient les chrétiens de manquer de patriotisme, et d'appeler

It is, indeed, not true that they invoked the barbarians; but it is true that Christians destroyed the unity of the pagan Empire and were careless of political duties, and so in both ways hastened its downfall. The philosophy of paganism inculcated as a duty the active discharge of civic obligations, but current Christian philosophy encouraged the neglect of mere worldly things.[1]

Nor were these doctrines, necessarily at first sight repulsive to an ordinary man of the world, always advanced in such a favourable way as to win a serious consideration. St. Augustine severely and hotly condemned those Christians who in his day pursued a system of interpretation of Scripture by no means unknown among us at present. The great doctor of the Church tells us that there are many pagans well acquainted with questions relating to the earth, the motions of the heavenly bodies, the properties of plants, animals, and minerals—learned, in fact, in the science of the day. 'Now,' he says, 'it is a most shameful and pernicious thing, and greatly to be avoided, that a Christian discoursing on such matters, according to the Christian Scriptures, should rave to that extent that an unbeliever, noticing how utterly he wanders from the truth, should with difficulty be able to repress his laughter. And what is most annoying is, not that the man

les invasions. Ce reproche était sans justice, plutôt que sans fondement' (*Revue des Questions Hist.* tom. vi. p. 252).

[1] 'Wenn noch die stoische Philosophie, einst die Schützwehr der Besseren gegen die Leiden der Kaiserherrschaft, den Bürger zur thätigen Pflichterfüllung im Staat aufgefordert hatte, so trieb ihn die christliche Philosophie zur Verläugnung alles Staatlichen an' (Gregorovius, vol. i. p. 133).

brings ridicule on himself by his foolish raving, but that outsiders are led thereby to suppose that these are the opinions of our sacred writers, whom in consequence they reject as ignorant persons, to the great detriment of those for whose salvation we labour. For when unbelievers find a Christian to be in error as to things with which they are perfectly well acquainted, and hear him backing up his errors by the authority of our sacred books, how is it possible for them to give credence to what these books state concerning the resurrection of the dead, the hope of eternal life and the kingdom of heaven, after they have been led to suppose that these books contain false statements concerning matters which they themselves have tested by experience, or can prove by undeniable arguments? The annoyance and grief which these rash and presumptuous Christians cause to thoughtful brethren is greater than can be expressed.'[1]

As thoughtful brethren must at all times form a small portion of any community, it must have requently happened that the would-be instructor of an educated pagan was a well-intentioned but ill-instructed enthusiast; he perhaps answered objections by referring to the vanity of knowledge; and, giving his own interpretation to certain texts, he left his questioner under the generally received pagan idea that Christianity taught, 'Do not examine; only believe: thy faith will make thee blessed. Wisdom is a bad thing in life, foolishness is good'—words which the Christians were ever repeating, according to Celsus.[2]

[1] St. Augustine, *Genesis ad Literam*, lib. i. cap. 19.

[2] Neander, *Church History*, vol. i. p. 227.

The paganism at the close of the Empire, the enemy with which Christianity had to contend, was not a belief in the monstrous superstitions of earlier times. Such myths were left to the vulgar. Epictetus, Plutarch, Maximus Tyrius, Apuleius, and Celsus had taught men of culture to acknowledge one supreme Divinity, under whom the popular gods had a place as deified men, about whom certain foolish stories had been told, and whose worship was justified by ancient usage.[1] There were also sceptics, like Lucian, and there was a widespread belief in magical mysticism. Such a superstition we, though living at the close of the nineteenth century, have little reason to laugh at; seeing that even now believers in Spiritualism, Esoteric Buddhism, and so forth, rival the absurdities of the most credulous Neo-Pythagoreans, such as the followers of Alexander of Abousteichos, so amusingly described by Mr. Froude. Necessarily opposed by the overwhelming force of Christianity, philosophic paganism died a lingering death, to the last associated with a society in the enjoyment of civilised affluence. In cultured Athens, where the 'wealthy lived in palaces and purchased libraries,' the academy of Plato maintained an almost uninterrupted succession of teachers for nearly nine hundred years.[2]

Nor were martyrs wanting in its cause. The philosophers, representatives of that cult which had inflicted so many cruel persecutions on the Christians, were in their turn the subjects of fierce oppression, and shed

[1] T. W. Cellier, *Formation of Christendom*, vol. iii. p. 252.
[2] Finlay, *History of Greece*, vol. i. p. 287.

their blood under the Emperor Zeno. At last Justinian confiscated the funds, and finally closed the schools of Athens in 529—the same year, Gregorovius remarks, which witnessed the foundation of the monastery of Monte Cassino, and the establishment of the Benedictine Order, to which literature owes so much. One of the seven philosophers who fled from Athens in Justinian's time was Simplicius. Professor Brandis [1] tells us that this writer renounced magical theurgic superstitions, and drew from the original sources a thorough knowledge of the older Greek philosophy ; so that his commentaries on Aristotle are the most valuable which have come down to us. Not less important are his accounts of the ancient astronomical systems, and there is a trace in his writings of the modern spirit of research into nature. Such is the figure which closes the long series of pagan philosophers.

That the aristocracy were among the last adherents of paganism in the East and West is acknowledged. 'The last heathen fancies of the philosophic schools disappeared where they had found their last asylum,' says Finlay,[2] writing of the middle of the sixth century. 'La haute aristocratie du monde romain conservait également (with the lowest rank of the peasantry) une longue fidélité aux traditions païennes,' says Ampère;[3] and he draws a parallel between this conservatism and that of the highest and lowest in La Vendée. But to attribute the anti-Christian opinions of the upper classes solely to conservative instincts is to

[1] Smith, *Dict. of Class. Biog.* [2] *History of Greece*, vol. i. p. 287.
[3] *Hist. Litt. de la France*, vol. ii. p. 77.

shut one's eyes to the very obvious facts I have just pointed out.

Moreover, as M. Ampère himself tells us,[1] the literary class (by no means confined to the nobles) showed the same dislike to Christianity. The philosophers and historians of the East and the rhetoricians of the West as a rule rejected the Gospel. It cannot be doubted that literary and philosophic studies declined as belief in Christianity advanced; and this was inevitable. Such studies were bound up with paganism, and were necessarily opposed by the great body of Christian teachers. St. Jerome naturally exults in the decline of philosophic studies. 'How many now read Aristotle? How many know even the names of Plato's writings? Here and there, in some retired nook, old age cons them at its leisure; while our rustics and fishermen are the talk of all, and the whole world echoes with their discourse.'[2] These words of St. Jerome are not to be taken quite literally; when he wrote 'vix in angulis otiosi senes eos recolunt,' youthful students of the upper classes were learning Greek philosophy and literature in Gaul; and we have seen that Plato's school in Athens continued on for nearly a century and a half after the publication of the Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, in which this passage occurs.

[1] M. Ampère says: 'Il y avait encore une classe d'hommes que leurs études et leurs goûts enchaînaient au paganisme; c'étaient les littérateurs; tous ceux qui n'avaient pas embrassé la cause du Christianisme, et ils étaient fort nombreux, soutenaient la vieille religion liée à la vieille littérature avec l'attachement du métier et la passion de l'habitude' (*Hist. Litt.* vol. ii. p. 78).

[2] Mullinger, *op. cit.* p. 10.

## CHAPTER II.

### OBSTACLES TO THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY AMONG THE UPPER CLASSES.

We are told that it is the business of philosophy to answer three questions: What can we know? What ought we do? and What may we hope? The answers which philosophy has given, and still gives, to these questions are apparently not such as win the enthusiastic approval of earnest believers in Gospel truth. Common-sense applied to worldly matters certainly led the pagans to answers widely different from those given by thinkers of the stamp of St. Jerome. We need feel no surprise, therefore, that he should rejoice at the downfall of learning, which inculcated conduct so antagonistic to the unworldly spirit of his faith. The wisdom of St. Jerome was foolishness to the Roman noble, a man of the Court, the forum, and the camp, reared in the study of literature and philosophy; essentially a cultured man of the world. To him the monastic life, the ideal of such ascetics as St. Jerome, was supreme folly. Claudius Rutilius, a type of the learned pagan official of the early part of the fifth century, wrote of the monks :—

Processu pelagi jam se Capraria tollit :
Squalet lucifugis insula plena viris.
Ipsi se *monachos* Graio cognomine dicunt,
Quod soli nullo vivere teste volunt.
Munera fortunae metuunt, dum damna verentur ;
Quisquam sponte miser, ne miser esse queat ?[1]

The poem of Rutilius describes his journey returning from Rome to Gaul, his native country. On learning the sad condition to which Gaul was reduced by the barbaric invasions, the poet relinquished his position as Prefect of Rome, and like a good citizen hurried off to lend what aid he could to re-establish order. He was going to meet armed enemies, and possibly felt that these *lucifugi viri*, who made the very sight of the beautiful Capraria so hateful to him, were not less dangerous foes. He would have certainly felt so could he have foreseen that the Germans, aided by the monks, would in a few years sweep away from Gaul almost every trace of what he valued most highly in life. But Rutilius had no such visions of the future. With that curious fatuity which generally blinds the adherents of a failing cause, the pagans standing on the verge of destruction despised the barbarians, and looked at Christianity itself as a passing delusion of the day. He ridiculed Christianity and the monks, as M. Ampère remarks, in just the same spirit as Voltaire did thirteen centuries later.[2]

Whatever were the shortcomings of the Roman Imperial system—and they were undoubtedly many and sufficiently grievous—want of care for education was

[1] Verses 439 to 444. Quoted in Gregorovius, vol. ii. p. 15.
[2] Ampère, vol. ii. p. 94.

not among them. Great schools for higher studies, many of them true universities, were scattered over its vast surface. The philosophical school of Athens, the great law school of Berytus, the university of Edessa, the schools of Alexandria, the university of Constantinople, established in a building called the Octagon burned by Leo the Isaurian, were all celebrated.[1] There were schools in Rome and other Italian cities in which law, rhetoric, philosophy, and medicine were taught, while similar establishments were scattered broadcast over Gaul. The great schools of Trèves, Bordeaux, Autun, Toulouse, Poitiers, Lyons, Marseilles, and many others are mentioned by Guizot.[2] The professors of all these places formed a highly favoured class. From Constantine to Theodosius there is a series of edicts conferring various privileges on them in Gaul. They were exempt from nearly all civic burdens, both services and taxes; but, though enjoying an immunity from onerous offices, they had the privilege of being invested with the highest magistracies or *honores*.

But these great establishments were little used by the Christians. 'The sciences they taught; grammar and rhetoric, pagan by origin, and dominated by the ancient pagan mind, had little interest for Christianity.'[3] The professors, who were appointed by the State, were either pagans or indifferent in religious matters. Moreover these schools were frequented by the upper classes; and, especially in Gaul, the Christians at first belonged to the lower ranks. Thus, among Christians, feelings

[1] Cantù, Paris, 1859, vol. vi. p. 420.

[2] *Civilisation in France*, vol. i. p. 349.

[3] Guizot, vol. i. p. 352.

both of religion and class were hostile to these educational institutions supported by the State. The emperors might endow these schools, and laws might load the professors with privileges; but a more powerful ruler than the Emperor, and a more potent force than the law, had pronounced their doom. The Church denounced them, and public opinion was against them. Frequented solely by a dwindling aristocracy, growing fewer and poorer almost daily from the effects of the barbarian incursions, the schools shrivelled away, until the Teutons put an end to the mockery of life that remained in them.

The contest between the pagan or semi-pagan aristocracy and the Church was a death-struggle. On one side was a small wealthy and instructed society; on the other, a Church, young, ardent and aspiring, believed in and obeyed by the people with enthusiasm. It was a battle between two ever opposed principles—common-sense trying to make the best of this world by the light of reason alone, and religious fervour echoing Loyola's favourite text, 'What shall it profit the man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' There was little thought in those days of the modern art of making the most of both worlds. St. Ambrose[1] frankly denounced the wealthy, and contrasted the Divine origin of communal property with the merely human basis on which individual ownership rested. He insisted on the literal fulfilment of the words of the Gospel, 'Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.' The man who

[1] Ampère, vol. i. p. 386; *id.* p. 392; *id.* p. 394.

gives all he possesses to the poor is still the poor man's debtor ; he owes to him his salvation, he is *debitor salutis*. To receive interest on money was a heinous crime, according to the current theology.

The very basis of what is called civilised life seemed to be shaken by such teachings ; and we cannot be surprised at their rejection by wealthy cultured pagan or sceptical nobles. That those who possess wealth and the good things of this world shall almost infallibly suffer eternal torture in the next might possibly be a comfortable doctrine to the poor, but it could hardly be expected to commend itself to the rich. Nor did pity, taking account of the future eternal misery of the wealthy, always lessen the natural envy, often rising to hate, felt by the poor for those in easy circumstances. Fanatics—and religion always begets such among the weaker sort—felt that these rich were God's enemies, and as such deserved the severest punishment both here and hereafter. St. Basil told the rich man, or even the man of moderate wealth, who could say 'I am poor ; I have need enough myself of all my means,' that he is a robber : 'Yea, the bread which you keep to yourself, whereof you have more than serves for the use of your family, belongs to the poor who die of famine ; the garments which you keep locked up in your wardrobe belong to the naked ; the money which you hide belongs to the ruined,' and winds up a terrible denunciation with the words of Scripture, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire . . . for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink.'[1]

[1] Dupin, *Eccles. Writers*, vol. i. p. 245.

Such teaching must have only served to rouse many men to anger, and there seems little reason to doubt that ill-will towards the upper classes was increased rather than diminished by the spread of Christianity. The communistic side of the new doctrine necessarily attracted the poor and repelled the rich; in this way sectarian animosity was added to that of class.[1] We of the present day have, as Mr. Spencer points out, got into a state of confusion between the altruism we profess and the egoism we habitually practise; between what we really believe and what we believe we believe; and we are perhaps too apt to consider that ancient Christians were in the same condition as ourselves. But it was not modern interpretations nor modern half-beliefs that filled the deserts of the Thebaid, or those islands of the Italian coasts, with the sorrowful population which so roused the anger of Rutilius. St. Ambrose, carried away with admiration for those *lucifugi viri*, speaks of these islands as a chaplet of pearls crowning Italy.

What was held to be laudable conduct among Christians of the fifth century is very well shown in

[1] 'If we want to know the origin of Socialism historically, we must turn to the *Corpus Juris Canonici*. It was the Catholic Church which first preached Communism' (Baring Gould, *Germany*, p. 400). Gibbon (*Decline and Fall*, vol. ii. p. 123) pretends to be unwilling to associate the rising of the peasants in Gaul in the time of Diocletian with the spread of Christianity in that province. In a note he rejects the statement that the leaders of the Bagaudæ, Ælianus and Amandus, were Christians, as resting on insufficient authority. At all events, the rising took place thirty or forty years after the commencement of very energetic missionary work in Gaul; and in subsequent history peasant revolts are generally, if not always, connected with religious movements.

the lives of two Roman matrons of the highest class, Melania the elder and her grand-daughter, St. Melania. The first of these ladies is known as 'Melania the elder,' to distinguish her from her grand-daughter the saint. Melania the elder was of illustrious family, married some Roman official of high rank, and became the mother of three children. In a single year she lost her husband and two children, and was left a widow at the early age of twenty-three, with the care of an only son, Publicola, and with the uncontrolled disposal of vast wealth. Abandoning her child to the care of some friends in Rome, the young widow went to Alexandria under the guidance of a priest, Rufinus, attracted to Egypt by the fame of the rigorous asceticism of the monks in the deserts of the Thebaid and Nitria. She arrived in Alexandria a short time before the death of the great Saint Athanasius, and received from his hands a relic of the Thebaid, a sheepskin given to him by St. Macarius. This pious lady then made a pilgrimage to the hideous desert of Nitria, where she remained for some months, receiving instruction from St. Pambo and other hermits. Shortly after the death of St. Athanasius a cruel Arian persecution broke out in Alexandria; Melania accompanied the exile of 126 bishops and monks to Palestine, where she supported them out of her fortune. For twenty-five years she lived in the Holy Land, supplying the wants of vast numbers of the poor bishops, monks, and pilgrims of every kind, and founded a convent of fifty nuns in Jerusalem. Melania spared nothing in the cause of charity, neither fortune nor personal labour, for she

herself lived a life of industrious penury; but she fell under the stigma of theological error: her director, Rufinus, adopted some of the errors of Origen, and she sided with him. Mr. Baring Gould in this way accounts for her name not being found in the Calendars of the East and West.[1]

While Melania the elder was leading this life of austere self-sacrifice in the East, her son, Publicola, grew up in Rome, and in due course married a Roman lady of rank equal to his own—Albina, sister of Volusianus, a pagan who occupied the position of Prefect of Rome. The only child of Publicola and Albina was St. Melania, born about 382. While very young St. Melania was married to Pinianus, son of Severus, Prefect of Italy and Africa, a man of the noblest descent. The young couple seem to have come under the influence of a relative, the celebrated St. Paulinus of Nola. This pious man, a noble of consular rank and great wealth, had earned distinction as an orator and poet; he was the intimate friend of Ausonius, and led like him the same life of active employment, and, if not an absolute pagan, was of very doubtful Christianity. At the age of thirty-seven Paulinus became a convert, sold his great estates, distributed the proceeds to the poor, and only reserved to himself a small plot of ground near Nola, in Campania, on which stood the tomb of St. Felix. Here the poet, eloquent advocate, and statesman of the past lived as the guardian of a martyr's tomb, himself suffering a self-inflicted martyrdom; and with him his faithful wife Therasia, no longer wife but sister.

[1] *Lives of the Saints*, December, p. 419.

As it seldom happened that a man of the rank, wealth, and talent of Paulinus adopted a religious life, his fame was, no doubt, noised abroad among the faithful; but the neglect, perhaps the contempt, of old friends was very bitter to the tender heart of the enthusiast. 'Where,' he wrote,[1] 'are my relatives? Where are the ties of blood? What avails the domestic roof-tree? I have become, as the Psalmist says, a stranger among my brethren. My friends, aye, and my nearest ones, are gone; they have passed from my side like a river that flows away.' Even the Pope, St. Siricius, treated him with coldness.[2]

But his young relative St. Melania was not among the number of the scorners; she watched his self-abasement with admiration, and longed for an opportunity of imitating his example. On the death of their second infant, St. Melania being twenty years old, and her husband twenty-four, she succeeded in persuading Pinianus to consent to a separation and a future life of religious poverty. Melania the elder, now about sixty years of age, hurried off at once from her retreat in Jerusalem to support the pious resolve of her granddaughter, and defeat the natural opposition of the other

Ampère, p. 276.

It seems possible that Siricius, a Roman by birth and well acquainted with the politics of the Empire, was disinclined to countenance the exalted fervour of the ascetics. He appears to have distrusted St. Jerome, and is blamed by Baronius for doing so. Though a zealous advocate of clerical celibacy, he may have disliked efforts to make such a restraint more general. The name of Siricius does not appear to have been inserted in the Roman martyrology till the eighteenth century, in the pontificate of Benedict XIV. (see Artaud de Montor. *Hist. des Pontifes Rom.* vol. i. p. 186).

members of the family to this shipwreck of two young lives. For some years the energetic old lady lived in Rome, and while there succeeded in overcoming all obstacles, including that of the Emperor, or rather his ministers, who refused to sanction the sale of the family estates. She occupied her time, as M. de Montalembert tells us, in propagating among her family and friends a taste for the monastic life, and in exhorting them to sell their goods and follow her into the desert. Much success attended her pious labours. She converted Apronianus, a pagan noble married to her niece, and induced this couple to separate. She also overcame the opposition of Albina, St. Melania's mother, and prevailed on this lady to abandon her husband and adopt a religious life. Melania was victorious; the work of charity began. Eight thousand slaves were manumitted. The family estates in Rome, in Italy, Aquitaine, Spain, and Britain were sold. 'The sum realised was so great that it was thought none but the Emperor possessed more.' The victor had her triumph; she led her procession of penitents, including nearly all her family—her son Publicola and Albina, her grand-daughter St. Melania, with Pinianus and a crowd of others. They went first to Sicily and afterwards to Africa, where St. Augustine was ready to receive them. The vast sum of money realised by the sales was distributed in charity. What property was left to them was treated as a trust for pious uses. St. Melania supported herself by her labours as a copyist, and Pinianus learned the humble business of market gardening. Having thus provided for her family, Melania the elder retired to her convent

in Jerusalem, where she shortly afterwards ended her days in peace.

Crowds of noble and wealthy women were similarly led by religious enthusiasm to devote themselves to a life of celibacy and voluntary poverty. The Roman patricians were naturally moved to rage by seeing their wealthy relatives, and even the graceful ladies of spotless lineage they hoped to wed, induced—almost, as it seemed, compelled—to consign themselves to a form of life which the unregenerated pagan naturally looked on as a living death. So great was the outcry that an edict of Valentinian I. (A.D. 370) forbade all priests, or others devoted to celibacy, to enter the houses of widows or unmarried women under tutelage, and made all gifts or bequests from such females to ecclesiastical persons null and void.[1] This law, as indeed might be expected, had little effect. Some years afterwards St. Jerome, during his residence in Rome, succeeded in winning a great number of rich and noble ladies to the cause of monasticism. His success, however, roused a strong feeling of hostility to the saint. So strong was it that, on the death of his patron, Pope St. Damasus, St. Jerome withdrew from Rome; all the more readily, perhaps, because the new Pope, Siricius, showed himself little inclined to encourage the prevailing enthusiasm.

St. Jerome departed with no love in his heart for Rome; he said he was 'a fool for wishing to sing the Lord's song in a strange land.' Rome was not a place altogether favourable for the spread of such teaching as

[1] Mr. Lea (*Sacerdotal Celibacy*, p. 63) takes a view of this law which is not supported by historical facts.

St. Jerome's; not merely was his extreme asceticism distasteful to 'these beasts the senatorial class of both sexes,' as the high Roman nobility were called by Palladius (the contemporary historian of early monasticism), but even the *plebs*, though necessarily gainers by the inculcation of an almost unbounded charity, were frequently restive. For instance (in 384), on the death of Blesilla, the young widowed daughter of St. Paula, both pupils of St. Jerome, there was a dangerous riot. The young lady was dear to the populace; she was, or she was considered to be, the descendant of the Scipios and of the Julian race. On the news of her death the people rose in fury. The streets resounded to cries, 'She has been killed by fasting!' 'Stone the monks!' 'Throw them into the Tiber!'

Although the female sex gave, among the upper classes, more disciples and a greater number of enthusiastic advocates of the ascetic movement during the fourth and fifth centuries, still the number of men of rank who adopted the religious life was by no means inconsiderable. St. Jerome was proud of his penitent Pammachius, the husband of Paulina, one of the daughters of Paula mentioned above. On the death of his wife, this nobleman, 'the son, grandson, and great-grandson of consuls,' donned the black gown of the monk and abandoned the Senate. St. Jerome says of him, 'an illustrious man, eloquent and rich, he descended from the highest rank to become the companion of the lowest. But before giving himself to Jesus Christ, his name was only known in the Senate: unknown when rich, to-day he is blessed in all the churches of the

world.' Rutilius, of course with very different feelings from those of the saint, mentions the case of a noble friend who became a monk. When, during his voyage, the little island of Gorgona came in sight, the poet wrote: 'I detest its rocks, the memorial of a recent loss; for here a citizen lies buried in a living grave. Yesterday he was one of us, he was young, of illustrious birth, of ample means, and happily married. Driven by the Furies, he abandoned gods and men. Now the credulous exile loves his vile lurking hole, and thinks that he gratifies the celestial powers; he persecutes himself more cruelly than did the gods he has offended. Now, I ask you, is not this sect more blighting than the drugs of Circe? Then were changed the bodies, now the minds.'[1]

With the ethics or theology of asceticism we have nothing to do. The only question before us is, How would ascetic doctrines affect the ordinary man of culture engaged in the every-day business of life, such men as formed the upper class at the fall of the Empire? The extract from Rutilius supplies the answer. However, a glance at a few points in the history of asceticism may not be out of place.

At a very early age there were among Christians

[1] 'Aversor scopulos, damni monimenta recentis;
Perditus hic vivo funere civis erat.
Noster enim nuper, juvenis majoribus amplis,
Nec censu inferior, conjugiove minor;
Impulsus Furiis homines divosque reliquit,
Et turpem latebram credulus exul amat.
Infelix putat illuvie celestia pasci;
Seque premit laesis saevior ipse deis.
Nunc, rogo, deterior Circaeis secta venenis?
Tunc mutabantur corpora, nunc animi.'

zealous seekers after religious perfection, who were called *ἀσκηταί*. These lived as celibates, studied the Scriptures, and supported themselves by manual labour; anything they earned over what sufficed for a bare subsistence they distributed among the poor.[1] The word *ἀσκητής* meant originally 'artisan' or 'skilful person,' as opposed to *ἰδιώτης*, an 'unskilled person,' and was used for what we might call an 'adept.' In this way it became common as applied to philosophers. In fact, ascetic and philosopher were synonymous. Under the influence of a number of very great and ardent teachers, such as Athanasius, Basil, Chrysostom, Jerome, Ambrose, and Augustine, the fourth and the early part of the fifth century witnessed a remarkable development of the early asceticism, which in their hands took the form of monasticism. Monks and nuns assumed the proportions of a vast army, and the ascetic or monastic virtues were preached by a host of enthusiastic men. It was a great religious movement, such as Methodism was in England thirteen hundred years afterwards, but of course on an incomparably greater scale.

Every great religious movement, however good in itself, is fated to produce much misery and crime. Knaves fatten on it, and fools turn the good in it into poison. The monastic enthusiasm was by no means an exception. Even so zealous a promoter of monasticism as St. Jerome was keenly alive to the abuses he saw about him. He speaks of the excessive rigour of some, which ruined health and mind, and left its victims 'less in need of our advice than of the arts of Hippocrates.'

[1] Neander, *Church History*, vol. i. p. 380.

Some, he complains, nominally renounce the world, but live as before, surrounded by the apparatus of luxury. Others make a show of fasting by day, and make amends by banquets at night. He censures the arrogance of others, who believe themselves superior to the rest of mankind after living a little time in monastic seclusion. Men who spend more time enjoying themselves in the town than in their cells, and who, playing a modest part among the brethren, jostle aside all the passengers in the public thoroughfares.[1] St. Augustine found the monasteries made use of as a shelter for slothfulness by the idle and those who wished to escape from civic burdens. A law of the Emperor Valens had attempted to remedy this in 365 by ordering that such pretended monks should be sent back to civil life, and it was provided that monks should give up all their property to others, or leave their retreats.

The worst evils were connected with the wandering monks, such as those belonging to the sect of Massilians. These wandered about preaching a doctrine of idleness founded on texts chiefly borrowed from the Sermon on the Mount, such as 'Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.'[2] These wanderers, or *gyrovagi*, are said by St. Benedict to have been 'per omnia deteriores sarabaitis'; the *sarabaitae* he describes as 'monachorum teterrimum genus'; and observes 'de quorum omnium miserrimâ conversatione melius est silere quam loqui,' no doubt very justly.[3]

[1] Cantù, vol. vi. p. 376. [2] *Les Moines d'Occident*, vol. i. p. 225.
[3] Lea, *Sacerdotal Celibacy*, p. 113.

The Council of Chalcedon had endeavoured, apparently with small effect, to put an end to these lawless bands of religious impostors. The ascetic doctrines on celibacy were pushed so far by some sects as to involve forbidding all marriage. The Council of Gangra condemned these doctrines about 370, but there were numerous enthusiasts who continued to hold them; for neither council nor law can extirpate folly and hypocrisy. The condition of society was highly favourable to the growth of abuses. Peace had produced wealth, the people were ignorant and credulous. Prudentius, a pious Christian lawyer, whose profession gave him special advantages for studying the life about him, strongly censures the foolish piety, common in his day, which induced parents with the idea of saving their own souls to reduce their families to beggary.

> Et summa pietas creditur
> Nudare dulces liberos.

Under such conditions the business of the *gyrovagus* and the rest of the brood was both pleasant and profitable—to a rascal. There were manifest abuses among the better regulated sedentary communities; they were obviously growing in wealth as the general mass of the people was sinking into poverty. This contrast induced the pagan Zosimus to say that 'monks, being neither useful for war nor any other necessity of State, on the pretext of giving everything to the poor, occupy the greater part of the country, seducing as it were every one to poverty.'

The pagan nobles, of whom we may take Rutilius

as a type, saw all these things. They saw illustrious families becoming extinct in the cloister; wives leaving their husbands and husbands their wives; family estates sold for the purpose of founding establishments in which idleness and cowardice too often found a shelter; and they saw the country infested with hordes of so-called monks pillaging the ignorant poor. All this, too, at a time when it was of supreme moment that every man should be at his post, and the resources of the Empire husbanded to the uttermost; for the barbarians had entered into the possession of Roman territory. The pagan as a politician saw very clearly the evils produced by the spread of monasticism; while, as a man of the world, worldly, he was blind to the virtues of the monk. However criminal this dimness of vision of 'the beasts of the senatorial order' might appear to Palladius, we of the nineteenth century ought to form, or at least may be excused for forming, a more lenient judgment. An orthodox living writer[1] tells us that 'if the Gospel had presented the ascetic type of character for imitation' (which he believes it did not), 'our social experience must have rejected it in the long run.' The pagan of the fourth and fifth centuries considered, and indeed could hardly consider otherwise, that the Gospel did present an extremely ascetic type of character for imitation; therefore their social experience taught them to reject the type, and with it the religion which inculcated it.[2]

[1] Mr. Goldwin Smith, *Study of History*, p. 139.

[2] So many in all ages seem to have spelled asceticism out of their Bibles, since the days of the primitive *ἀσκηταί*, that one may be pardoned for doubting if the modern doctrine of the non-asceticism of the Gospel

The self-devotion of the monks and the real services they rendered to the poor soon overcame the dislike of the humbler classes; but educated and literary men as a rule continued to be bitterly opposed to monasticism. 'Lors même que les masses populaires eurent fini par subir l'ascendant de ces grands exemples—le mépris et la colère qu'inspiraient les moines se conservèrent chez beaucoup de gens, mais surtout chez les lettrés, et l'on en trouve la vigoureuse empreinte dans les poésies de Rutilius Numantianus.'[1] Asceticism is repulsive, and the monk grotesque, to the majority, perhaps, of English-speaking people in this nineteenth century of ours, but such were not the feelings of the fourth and fifth centuries. Monasticism was the most characteristic expression of the religious convictions of the age; and those who hated and despised monks may be suspected of sharing Rutilius's views of Christianity, which he compendiously conveyed in one word, *stultitia.*

For the sake of clearness, it may be well to restate very briefly the principal facts mentioned in the pre-

is quite clear. When Christian got out of the clutches of Mr. Worldly Wise-man, the respectable dweller in the City of Morality, Evangelist fortified him against doubts, suggested by the Moralists, touching the abandonment of his wife and children, with a certain passage: 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' We can fancy poor Bunyan in Bedford gaol hardening his mind with this stern text against the thought of his suffering wife and little ones, and even of his favourite, the helpless blind child. Certainly the Christians of the fourth and fifth centuries took the text 'So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple' in a very literal sense, so far as concerns the higher Christian life.

[1] Montalembert, *Les Moines d'Occident*, tom. i. p. 201.

ceding statement of causes tending to hinder the spread of Christianity among the upper classes of the later Roman Empire :—

I. The nobles as educated men.

1. They were opposed to the Church from its condemnation of pagan studies. 2. They must have been frequently repelled by the form which Christian doctrine assumed in the hands of ignorant though zealous men. 3. They, as a class, were strongly attached to what we may call the university system of the day. Many of the leading nobles at the period of the fall of the Empire had been, like Ausonius, professors in these great schools; and all, or nearly all, the nobility had been educated at them. Among such men the animosity of the Church to State education, under which these institutions were falling into ruins, must have given rise to very bitter feelings.

II. As men of wealth.

1. They were naturally repelled by doctrines which, if not really amounting to communism, are not very easily distinguishable from it. 2. Christianity was obviously incompatible with slavery, a principal and odious source of wealth in the ancient world.

III. As the principal official class.

They must have received with anger the doctrines of the more enthusiastic and less politic believers, who taught that military and even civil employment was barely compatible with a Christian life.

IV. Monasticism was repugnant to their social experience as politicians, and to their instincts as aristocrats.

Another point should be considered. The difficulty which a pagan would find in deciding what sect he would join among the many contending sects into which Christendom was unfortunately divided even at an early period.

## CHAPTER III.

### ON THE SUPPOSED CORRUPTION OF ROMAN SOCIETY.

SUCH are some of the reasons tending to explain the slowness with which Christianity spread itself in the senatorial class. The consideration of these facts may satisfy us that motives more reasonable than the dull conservatism of the *pagani* may have induced the party of culture to reject the new doctrines. We may be also led to conclude that this rejection of the Gospel did not necessarily imply in these obstinate pagans any degree of depravity greater than that of worldly-minded men of the present day, whose Christianity is often perhaps rather nominal than real. Imagine the case of any ordinary man of that age, brought up in the philosophy of Plutarch and Epictetus, who had learned from it, according to the definition of the former, 'what is noble and what is base; what is right and what is wrong; what to strive for and what to avoid.' From his teachers such a man would probably derive opinions very much the same as those of our modern world, and, like the men of that modern world, he would be apt to reject the current monasticism with impatient contempt. At all events the fact remains: the cultured

classes continued pagan long after the inferior classes had become Christian.

Now what does this fact imply? A widening of the interval between classes. Christianity had, as it were, driven a mighty wedge into the cleavage-plane marking the division between the orders of society. Above the cultured class was a Christian emperor, below it a Christian people, while a powerfully organised church was ceaselessly employed in working its ruin. Such a distinctive class must rapidly lose its influence, and was so obviously doomed to a speedy extinction that it speaks very highly for its *morale* to find that from its slender and fast thinning ranks great officials of State should still be selected. M. Ampère points out what he calls a singular contrast. The laws of the Empire were growing more and more severe against paganism, till at length, in 391, sacrifice to the gods was forbidden on pain of death. Still professed pagans continued to occupy the highest offices; and men like Libanius, Eunapius and Zosimus, who wrote with virulence against Christianity, were honoured with the confidence of Christian emperors. M. Ampère attributes this fact to a kind of survival of pagan toleration;[1] but this survival of pagan tolerance, in a society saturated with Christian intolerance, is the fact which demands explanation. Further on I shall have occasion to return to this point.

With the uncertain support of imperial favour paganism lingered on to the very end of the Western Empire. In 470, six years before the deposition of

[1] Ampère, *Hist. Litt.* vol. ii. p. 78.

Romulus Augustulus, a pagan philosopher and orator, Severus, a wealthy scholar long resident in Alexandria, obtained consular honour in Rome through the favour of the Emperor Anthemius. Even at this date the feeble remnant of the worshippers of Jupiter at Rome had not altogether renounced the delusive hope of a successful reaction.[1] Indirect evidence of the corruption of the upper classes from their loss of influence is inconclusive; as a body of men cut off from the rest of society by the wide and ever widening gulf of religious differences, they were necessarily deposed from their position as leaders of men. The direct evidence is, as I before pointed out, extremely weak. When Gregorovius was setting his palette to paint his picture of Roman life at the fall of the Empire, as he tells us, he was unable to find any other colours but those supplied by Ammianus, which meagre materials he ekes out by quotations from St. Jerome.[2] The very small evidence to hand would not, I think, have justified to the mind of the great historian the extremely harsh judgment he passes on the society of the age, had he not been somewhat under the influence of the preconceived notion that the fall of Rome was due to corruption. Be that as it may, the sketch we have from that master-hand scarcely reads like serious history. Belief in the absolute truth of such pictures is, in the words of M. Fustel de Coulanges, 'fatal to the

[1] Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, vol. vi. p. 194.

[2] 'Diese Stadt und ihr Volk, über welchem jetzt die gothische Verheerung hing, zu schildern, haben wir keine andern Farben, als jene welche der Geschichtschreiber Ammianus Marcellinus brauchte, um das Gemälde von den römischen Sitten seiner Zeit zu malen' (vol. i. p. 128).

progress of historic science and to the knowledge of human nature.'

No doubt the Roman nobles were most of them very wealthy; but is it an ascertained law that wealthy men are corrupt fools? If a man believes with St. Jerome that dirty clothes are a sign of a clean mind—'Sordidae vestes candidae mentis indicia sunt'—he may arrive at some conclusion of the kind; but such is not the teaching of history. In trying to form a mental picture of the wealthy and educated society of ancient Rome in the days of its fall, it is very necessary to be on our guard against sacrificing historic truth and common-sense to a convenient and striking theory. The example of Sallust, who had the singular honour of twice refusing the imperial diadem, and who continued to the end of his long life to be the trusted adviser of monarchs whose throne he might have filled, and many other instances show us that public spirit was not dead, nor virtue unhonoured, among the pagans.

Rutilius, an able and honest man, loved Rome and honoured the venerable Senate, of which he was a member; he envies those whose happier lot it was to have been born in the Eternal City, but consoles himself with the reflection that Senate and city alike receive all who are worthy of the honour.

'O quantum et quoties possem numerare beatos
Nasci felici qui meruere solo!
Qui, Romanorum procerum generosa propago,
Ingenitum cumulant urbis honore decus!
Semina virtutum demissa et tradita caelo
Non potuere aliis dignius esse locis.

Felices etiam, qui proxima munera primi
Sortiti, Latias obtinuere domos.
Religiosa patet peregrinae curia laudi ;
Nec putat externos, quos decet esse suos.'

The interlocutors in the 'Saturnalia' of Macrobius give the names of a few of the cultured group of pagans who formed the society around Rutilius. The poet himself mentions some officials of high rank with no stinted praise. His is no doubt the language of a panegyrist ; but what is the historic rule that obliges us to listen only to satirists? Truth, I suppose, lies between satire and panegyric.

When we turn to the Christian society of the upper class, we find such Romans as the pious Pammachius, the amiable Pinianus, and no doubt numbers of other men of sincere devotion, in addition to the many powerful learned and nobly born monks that St. Jerome could count in Rome. I must say that the great German historian [1] treats the Christians of Rome with the same scant measure of justice he deals to the pagans. He avowedly collects all the harsh sayings of St. Jerome, and only casually consoles the 'sensitive reader' with the admission that a more favourable picture of Christian life in Rome might be drawn from the Church Fathers.[2] Those who think he has been unduly severe on the Christians should admit that he is likely to have been at least as unjust to the pagans.

[1] Gregorovius, vol. i. p. 134.

[2] 'Wir entlehnten nur einige Farben dem Genie eines berühmten Kirchenvaters, und wir beruhigen den empfindlichen Leser mit der Versicherung, das sich diesen Nachtbildern Rom's auch einige Lichtgemälde aus eben jenen Kirchenvätern gegenüber stellen lassen' (vol. i. p. 139).

To describe a class or people from evidence collected in this way is to go perilously near to making history the thing Voltaire said it is, 'Nothing but a parcel of tricks we play the dead.' I do not mean for a single instant to convey that Gregorovius is consciously unfair. The great writer is transparently fair-minded; but it is almost impossible to shake oneself free from an accepted theory. The great fact is there plain to us. The Empire fell, and the theoretical explanation is that it fell from corruption. Fact and theory become confounded in the mind. The theory becomes a fact, and historical data which suit this fact are, as it were, unconsciously selected.

Another instance of unconscious bias is, I think, afforded by the historian's treatment of the lamentation of St. Jerome on the fall of Rome. Gregorovius describes very graphically the despair into which St. Jerome fell when the news of the capture of Rome by Alaric reached him in Bethlehem. The saint was so stunned by grief that he for some time seemed almost deprived of his belief in the providence of God. The historian says this passion of sorrow does honour to the saint, and he says so with truth: it relieves the somewhat too stern character of the ascetic. But does not that storm of passionate grief shed a ray of light on the ugly picture of Rome as a mere cloaca of vices? If the Rome he knew so well, where he had studied as a youth and laboured as a middle-aged man, had really appeared to St. Jerome as a Sodom or an accursed Babylon, would its destruction have so terribly affected him? We are told that this touch of human feeling raises our idea of the character

of the saint; but not a word as to its effect on our notion of the character of the men and women who perished in the doomed city, and over whose fate he wept. Is not this like playing tricks with the dead?

Again, both Gregorovius and Gibbon tell us one of the closing scenes of the Roman Senate. When describing the trial of Arvandus, as narrated by an eye-witness and friend of the accused Sidonius Apollinaris, Gregorovius is reminded of the days of Catiline and Verres. The haughty noble, who occupied the position of pretorian prefect, had cruelly oppressed Gaul and entered into treasonable correspondence with the Burgundians. Accused by the Gallic deputies, he was brought a prisoner before the Senate. His solemn trial and unanimous condemnation is graphically told by Sidonius. The immediate successor of Arvandus proved no better—so bad that Sidonius styles him the Catiline of the age; he, too, was tried and condemned by the Senate. Thus within five or six years of the final extinction of the Empire of the West, we see these Roman senators acting not as debased sensualists of the type of Reburrus, but as careful and incorruptible judges of high-placed crime. One would excuse the historian for lingering over such scenes. He stands as it were on the brink of chaos—the rejuvenators are at hand, order is dying, rational law is soon to be replaced by barbaric codes fixing prices for men's lives and limbs, for many a century the will of an irresponsible caste is to dominate mankind; but such things do not affect him: what he sees is universal corruption and a merited doom.

How does this degeneration theory accord with

common-sense? Our instructors the historians let us see more or less distinctly two classes in Roman society at the fall of the Empire: a pagan or rather deistical class of cultured men, educated in the philosophy of the late schools; and a Christian class of saintly men, guided by some of the greatest thinkers the Church has ever produced. These classes may have been small, but they existed, and interacted on each other necessarily for good. Christianity had something to learn from pagan public spirit, and assuredly the pagans had much to learn, and did in fact learn something from Christian virtues. Can the society in which such forces were at work have been altogether rotten? We are told to believe in this corruption on the authority of some texts carefully selected from a writer who does not attempt to disguise his anti-Roman prejudices, and who does not as a matter of fact venture to make his condemnation general. This slender evidence is supported by other carefully selected extracts from a saint, whose ascetic fervour was so great 'that he had no patience with those good Christians who would not leave all, and come into the desert to him.'[1] The theory does violence to our knowledge of human nature, and is established by a method contrary to the spirit of true historic inquiry.

No doubt this society perished. But is any one childish enough to believe that failure or extinction of an individual, of a class, or even of a nation,[2] is proof

[1] Baring Gould, *Lives of the Saints*, September, p. 458.

[2] The case of a nation need not be included for the purposes urged here; it is sufficient that the argument applies to the existence or de-

of utter demerit? If so, he has read history to little purpose. Suppose—no impossible supposition—that the House of Lords was abolished next year,[1] would that prove that the institution was utterly corrupt? We know that the order of which it is composed never probably at any period of history contained abler or more upright men. Yet its influence is declining, and perhaps the institution is tottering to its fall. We see the forces undermining its authority visibly at work; much that we see will be invisible perhaps to scholars in the year 3000; let us hope that the learned men of the future will not hit on a theory of universal corruption, and justify that theory by the pages of the fierce opponents of the Order.

Closely connected at Rome, as elsewhere, with the nobles was the little world of the *literati*. Our historians do not supply us with much information as to the number or position of this class about the time of the fall. Macrobius introduces the names of the jurist Postumius, the philosophers Eustachius and Harus, the learned physician Disarius, and the grammarian Servius. That there were establishments in which literature, rhetoric, and philosophy were taught, and that Rome was famous as a school of jurisprudence, is plain enough. That the professors in Rome as elsewhere occupied an honoured position is also clear; as late as 470 we have

struction of a class. If, indeed, a nation be of such size and number that it need not be overwhelmed by a neighbour, or if it yield without having offered a noble resistance, then its fall may well be ascribed to inherent defects. Either its inhabitants are feeble, or its progress, constitution, and organisation are imperfect and undeveloped.

[1] This was written about 1886.—[Ed.]

seen one of this class, the philosopher Severus, receiving the highest honour a subject could hold, the position of consul. St. Ambrose and St. Jerome were both sent as boys to Rome to study grammar, as then understood, including philosophy and rhetoric, and to qualify themselves for the profession of advocate. St. Augustine, we are told, abandoned his position as professor of rhetoric at Carthage, and went to Rome against the wishes of his family; he was led to this step, he himself tells us, by the superior character of the Roman students. Some years after the sack of Rome by Alaric, Rutilius mentions that his young relative Palladius had been recently sent from Gaul to Rome to study Roman law at its source.[1] He sends back the young man, 'the hope and ornament of his race,' from Ostia to Rome to continue his studies there.

There was an active professional life. The busy courts, with crowds of advocates and proctors and excited suitors, were scenes the memory of which afterwards recalled his early life to St. Jerome when in his quiet cell at Bethlehem. There were physicians, surgeons, artists of all kinds, merchants, shop-keepers among whose booths we see Arvandus, during the intervals of his trial, wandering about clad in the gay robes of a candidate, cheapening the splendid wares offered to him by the eager shopmen. Last, and by no means the least important, were the money-lenders.

[1] 'Tum discessurus, studiis urbique remitto
Palladium, generis spemque decusque mei.
Facundus juvenis, Gallorum nuper ab arvis,
Missus Romani discere jura fori.'

The picture of life presented to our view is quite modern. Perhaps—but it is only a perhaps—the zeal for money-making was a little more ardent. As any society advances there is a great tendency to value wealth more and more highly. In the aristocratic stage of militant organisation, through which most societies have passed, birth determines position; gradually, with the growth of the industrial spirit, the aristocratic principle grows weaker. Men begin to agree with Plato. 'When they sing the praises of family, and say that some one is a gentleman because he has seven generations of wealthy ancestors, he (the philosopher) thinks that these sentiments only betray a dull and narrow vision in those who utter them, and who are not educated enough to look at the whole, nor to consider that every man has had thousands and thousands of progenitors, and among them have been rich and poor, kings and slaves, Hellenes and barbarians many times over.'[1]

By the spread of such ideas the pretensions of birth or caste come to be gradually discredited. In a civilised community a man grounds his claim to influence his fellows on birth, talent, knowledge, or wealth. The pretension of blue blood is somewhat in the position of Lucian's gods—a great power as long as believed in, but utterly powerless or non-existent when faith has passed away. Talent, knowledge, and wealth speak for themselves, but not with equal force to all men. Unfortunately talent and knowledge have no commensurate influence over those who themselves possess no share of either. Wealth alone appeals to all. The

[1] *Theætetus*, Jowett's *Plato*, vol. iv. p. 325.

dullest man can understand it, and the wisest must acknowledge its force. As a matter of common-sense, then, we can readily understand the reason of the growing power of wealth, so much deplored by Roman satirists and moralists. Salvianus, at the close of the Empire, echoes the old lament, 'Tanta est miseria hujus temporis ut nullus habeatur magis nobilis quam qui sit plurimum dives.'[1] *Dat census honores* had become the rule of the Empire. In a rough, a very rough way, wealth measures a kind of merit. 'To avow poverty with us is no disgrace; the true disgrace is doing nothing to avoid it,' wrote Thucydides. Success in avoiding poverty was, and is, taken as an indication of ability in all industrial societies such as ancient Athens, modern England, and to a very great extent imperial Rome.

At the fall of the Empire the old caste system had long ceased to exist. As early as B.C. 445 the rigid separation between patrician and plebeian had been broken down by the Lex Canuleia, which permitted intermarriage between the two classes. Still, no doubt, the proud patrician families visited with severe social punishment all such misalliances, and thus the patrician order remained practically exclusive. An exclusive society always tends towards extinction; so at the close of the Republic there only remained at Rome about fifty families of the patrician order. To remedy this state of affairs Cæsar elevated a number of plebeians to the patrician rank; Augustus and subsequent emperors followed his example. Gradually the old distinction of

[1] *De Gub. Dec.* lib. iii. c. 10. Ed. Migne.

blood passed away; the word patrician lost its significance, and came to mean a rank granted to particular individuals for life. At the fall of the Empire the noblest family in Rome was that of the Amicii, of plebeian descent. The new nobility was, in fact, of official origin, and entry into it was assured by the possession of wealth and ability. In pagan and official circles knowledge was of high account and lavishly rewarded; among all, wealth was honoured. Under such conditions, where industry led to high social advancement, where there were so many incentives to the accumulation of wealth, it is hard to believe there was much idleness; everything leads us to suppose that the mercantile and professional classes worked hard. The picture of such a life is not perhaps a pleasing one, but it was no world for *fainéants*. In a society where a man might, and often did, commence life as a slave and end it as a *sublimissimus*, the notion of aristocracy of birth must decline. So thoroughly did it fall that, as has been frequently remarked, Italy even now remains the most democratic of European countries. Perhaps, from this point of view, the new and thoroughly industrial societies of America and Australia would better convey to our minds the social condition of the later Roman Empire than our own surroundings, where Teutonic influences are by no means extinct.

We can readily picture to ourselves a wealthy and cultured aristocracy, forming an order, not a caste; we can with equal facility imagine a busy, money-making middle class, occupied with the ever present idea of

getting on in the world: such a state of things is certainly not unknown to Englishmen, but we can hardly realise the description given to us of the lower classes as forming part of the same society. These classes are described as incurably vicious and idle. Dr. Dyer tells us that 'the Roman people spent their whole time in drinking and dicing, in brothels, debauchery, and the public spectacles.'[1] Such is his lamentable picture of the Roman plebeians at the fall of the Empire. The lower classes had long ceased to do any work. Speaking generally of the Roman world, Dr. Smith writes: 'The mechanical arts, which were formerly in the hands of the *clientes*, were now entirely exercised by slaves;[2] a natural growth of things, for where slaves perform certain duties or practise certain arts, such duties or arts will be thought degrading to a freeman.'[3] This general idleness would have produced its natural fruit, the shocking depravity portrayed by Dr. Dyer. There is a certain dramatic fitness in this representation of the great historic tragedy, the fall of Rome. The doomed city becoming more wicked and more degraded day by day; a land of Cockaigne where no one worked, and where all, from the prince of the Senate down to the meanest aerarian, were steeped in profligate self-indulgence. Enter Nemesis.[4] 'The barbarians were advancing to put an end to this splendid degradation, and indeed it was high time.' The rejuvenators arrive, vice is overthrown and virtue triumphant. This is

[1] *History of City of Rome*, p. 305. [2] Cicero, *de Off.* i. 42.
[3] Article 'Servus,' by the Editor, *Dict. of Class. Ant.*
[4] Dyer, *loc. cit.*

sensational, but the important question should be asked: Is it true history, or tricks played with the dead?

The direct evidence as to the moral degradation of the Roman *plebs* at the close of the Empire is, as usual, a rhetorical passage from Ammianus. Dr. Dyer merely translates and somewhat condenses his authority. We are told the Roman people were a shoeless, ragged herd, homeless, and sleeping in wine-shops or under the awnings of the theatres; madly excited about sport, thoughtless of all else. They were insolent too to foreigners, a trait by no means agreeable to Ammianus: 'By way of making a noise, they would cry out that all foreigners should be expelled from the city; yet by the subsidies and contributions of these foreigners they had always been supported. In short, the cries of this degraded populace were altogether brutal and absurd, and very different from those of the ancient *plebs*, of whom many good sayings are recorded.' An altogether hateful people, particularly from the standpoint of an Asiatic Greek. Every great city contains a worthless rabble; and careless writers and speakers are apt to confound that rabble with the entire mass of the common folk. Sallust tells us all criminals flowed into Rome, like foul water into a sewer: 'Omnes quos flagitium aut facinus domo expulerat, ii Romae sicuti in sentinam confluxerant.' Of course there is some truth in this, but, as Seneca says,[1] all kinds of men flocked to a city offering such great rewards both to virtue and to vice. Every one who goes to London to seek his fortune is not

[1] 'Nullum non hominum genus concurrit in urbem et virtutibus et vitii magna praemia ponentem.'

necessarily a rascal. That the inhabitants of a city are all doomed to perdition seems to be a common enough idea, but certainly as a fact the city does not seem to be so much worse than the country.

However this may be, the progressive moral decline notion seems peculiarly out of place as applied to Rome during the third, fourth, and fifth centuries. During all that time Christianity was a growing force, spreading at first among the common people; and to suppose that such a movement effected no improvement in morals seems absurd. We know from Tertullian that the Christians largely shared in the ordinary life of Rome. Defending the brethren against the customary pagan assertion that they were 'homines infructuosi in negotio, in publico muti, in angulis garruli'—useless in business, dumb in public, talkative in private—an accusation founded on the conduct of some sectaries, Tertullian says: 'We, therefore, in common with you, inhabit the world, with its markets, baths, inns, workshops, fairs, and whatever else is considered necessary to the intercourse of life. We also, with you, pursue the business of navigation, of war, of commerce; we share in your employments, and contribute, out of our labour, to your profit and for the public service.' The influence and example of numbers of sedate, steadfast, and pious men, diffused among their ranks, must have been a potent instrument of good in the lower classes of society; yet we are told those classes were growing worse.[1]

Passing from the subject of plebeian vice in general, we may usefully confine our inquiries to one fault, which

[1] Neander, *Church History*, vol. i. p. 379.

may be taken as the parent of the rest. We are told that few freemen did work, that they were incurably idle, and that slaves alone laboured in the Roman world. Now, what does this imply when we consider the position of the city of Rome? With all the labours of indefatigable German students to aid him, the learned Dr. Dyer sums up what is known of the city population in his article 'Roma,' in the 'Dictionary of Classical Geography.' The total population is there estimated at about 2,045,000 souls—freemen and slaves. Dr. Dyer sets down the number of what we may call public slaves —that is, those not engaged in personal attendance on private owners—at 300,000. These public slaves must have provided men for several very large classes. (*a*) There were gladiators and other slaves connected with the circuses, theatres, and places of public amusement, or employed in the Thermae. (*b*) There were the many slaves required for the cleansing and maintenance of the public thoroughfares of a great city. (*c*) There were the labourers required for the carriage, storage, and distribution of grain, the bakers and others employed in the public ovens, &c. The commissariat department for the supply of two millions must have occupied the time and labour of no small number. (*d*) The remainder of the public slaves, after deducting the three preceding groups, must include all the artisans, carpenters, smiths, tailors, shoemakers, &c., required to satisfy the wants and whims of a vast and luxurious city. Taking all others into account, those available for this last class could hardly be rated at much more than 100,000. In the absence of machinery, where conse-

quently every article of utility or luxury had to be fashioned by the tedious processes of manual labour, and that too by what experience has always proved to be the least productive form of such work, the forced labour of slaves, the disposable number seems quite too small. A society in which from 90 to 95 per cent. of the members are idlers and men ministering to the personal gratification of idlers, while the remaining 5 per cent. or so are alone engaged in really productive industry, is *primâ facie* an impossible society; yet such, we are told, was Rome. Notwithstanding this strange economic position, Dr. Mommsen himself acknowledges that there are 'indications that to a certain extent trades were concentrated in Rome';[1] Cato, for instance, advises the Campanian land-owner to purchase certain articles in Rome, as being cheaper.

It is fortunate that the exigencies of the corruption theory do not require us to believe that the Romans were always idlers from primitive times downwards. That a State should become enormously wealthy and highly civilised under such conditions is contradictory to economic laws, and to some patent facts in Roman history. Whatever meaning we attach to the vague word civilisation, this much is certain, that no society can become civilised without the continuous labour of at least the greater part of the community. A long time must elapse, and much hard work be done, before any State has rendered its arts sufficiently productive, and has accumulated capital enough to permit any large number of its citizens to enjoy the late-coming privilege

[1] *History of Rome*, popular ed. vol. ii. p. 379.

of leisure. If any one rejects this view, and prefers to think that a State can become great and prosperous by the mere plunder of its neighbours, he at least must grant that there is ample evidence that, at an early stage of their history, the majority of the citizens of Rome were industrious, like the rest of progressive mankind.

One of the best attested facts in Roman history is the early formation and continued existence of corporations, or *collegia*, of workmen. Formed in the almost mythical times of the kings, these guilds continued through the republican and imperial eras, and passed on into the middle ages. 'Of all the measures of Numa the division of the plebeians, according to their trades, is the most admirable,' says Plutarch. Dr. Smith says that the trades were first exercised by the *clientes*, taking the view that the words *plebs* and *cliens* are convertible terms. This is the view of Mommsen; but Niebuhr, followed by Ampère, held that the *clientes* only formed a portion of the plebeian population. The notion conveyed by Plutarch is that all the inhabitants of Rome beneath the patrician rank were divided according to the trades they exercised.[1] Numa is said to have founded eight *collegia* of artisans. These corporations seem to have been rather trades grouped together than bodies of men following the one occupation; for example, the *collegium fabrorum* comprised a number of trades we should consider distinct—workers in wood, carpenters; workers in metals, blacksmiths, coppersmiths, &c. Each corporation had distinctive

[1] Plutarch, *Numa*, 17, vol. i. p. 140. Trübner.

religious rites, festivals, and assemblies; they formed bodies of the same kind as the trade guilds of mediæval times. These guilds were patronised by the emperors, and their number was increased by successive princes, till there were under Constantine thirty-five such corporations in Rome. The *collegia* spread everywhere within the bounds of the Empire; even in the distant province of Britain inscriptions prove the existence of *collegia fabrorum* in Chichester and Bath.[1]

Everything goes to prove that these were bodies of freemen. When we read of their assemblies, their election of officers, and see them taking their part in all great State ceremonials of the imperial times, each trade marching proudly under its own *vexilla* or standard, we may feel sure that the men we read of were freemen, and not slaves. Thus we see the importance of the class of artisans had received some recognition under the Empire, while in more primitive times some of them were placed in a very honourable position. Cicero tells us (*de Rep.* ii. 22) that under the Servian constitutions the century of carpenters, *fabri lignarii*, had the privilege of voting in the first class, on account of their importance to the city. No doubt, as the primitive conditions of society altered, the artisan class at Rome and elsewhere lost ground; but there is no reason to suppose, as Dr. L. Schmitz shows,[2] that workmen were ever as a class degraded to the position of *aerarii*, or citizens without votes, *cives sine*

[1] Coote, *Romans in Britain*, p. 396; Wright, *Celt, Roman, and Saxon*, p. 427, 4th ed.

[2] Article 'Aerarii,' *Dict. Class. Ant.*

*suffragio*, as Niebuhr contended. It is unfortunate that there is no portion of Roman life on which information is so scanty as on matters touching Roman trades.[1] However, M. Fustel de Coulanges, by his careful researches into inscriptions and other available sources, gives a sufficient idea as to the place occupied by the working classes in Rome and the other cities of the Empire. Above the slaves came the various classes of freemen; the lowest grade of the latter were men in absolute poverty, who lived for the most part on gratuitous distributions of bread and corn. This class received little consideration from others, and valued themselves cheaply enough. Above this degraded class of freemen were the artisans regimented into their various guilds. The guild gave its members protection against the superior classes, security for their employments, and even some dignity in life. Above the artisans were the traders and merchants, similarly formed into guilds. Above these came the men of real property, rising according to their census in a regular hierarchy up to the senatorial rank. I venture to think that a passage in Plautus (*Rudens*, act ii. sc. 1) shows clearly enough that there was in his day a low class of freemen, such as described by M. de Coulanges, who envied with reason the superior condition of the artisans.

'Omnibus modis, qui pauperes sunt homines, miseri vivunt;
Praesertim quibus nec quaestus est, nec didicere artem ullam.'

Plautus, who in early life was servant in a baker's family and had to turn a corn-mill to gain his living, was

[1] Mommsen, vol. i. p. 203.

certainly not ignorant of the ills he describes so feelingly in the next few lines. There was an old notion that the poet was called Asinius from the humble quadruped whose labour he shared, or whose office he usurped, while working at his mill. Want of skill forced Plautus to enter that lowest rank of mercenaries 'quorum operae, non artes emuntur,' as Cicero says in the passage quoted by Dr. Smith. About eighty years elapsed between the death of Plautus and the birth of Cicero; hence, if Dr. Smith's inference from the 'De Officiis' is correct, we must assume that in the interval between those writers a great revolution had taken place in the plebeian character; that in Cicero's time no freeman could any longer be found to labour, not merely at such scurvy work as turning a mill, but even at the once honoured labour of the skilled craftsman; that every shoeless, ragged, half-starving aerarian had learned a philosophic contempt for the work of the artisan, and had become so proud that he rejected with scorn labours defiled by slaves!

When we turn to the chapter of the 'De Officiis' referred to by Dr. Smith, we find there little or nothing to justify the proposition that all manual labour was performed by slaves. Cicero considers different occupations from the standpoint of a Stoic moralist. Some are condemned as immoral, others are censured as illiberal. The strongest censure on handicrafts, the only passage giving the slightest support to Dr. Smith's proposition, is contained in the clause, 'Opificesque omnes in sordidâ arte versantur; nec enim quidquam

ingenuum habere potest officina.'[1] This simply implies that in Cicero's opinion, from his moral standpoint, the business of an artisan is a mean occupation, and that a workshop is no place for a gentleman. Many at the present day would consider this a truism; but, true or false, such a proposition throws a very scanty light on the social condition of the working classes in Rome: it is merely the expression of a philosophic commonplace, characteristic of a certain school of ancient thought.

Contempt for the common arts of civilised life was usual among Stoics, particularly Roman Stoics. Seneca censures the Syrian Greek philosopher Posidonius, a Stoic, for supposing that the useful arts were invented by ancient sages. 'Not so,' says Seneca; 'for the shrewdness, not the wisdom, of mankind invented all matters of that kind.' The clever, not the wise, devised all these arts, and everything that must be laboured at with curved back and mind directed to the ground. To complete the discomfiture of his erring master, Seneca appeals to unimpeachable authority. He apostrophises Posidonius (who had been the teacher of Cicero, and was dead about a century when Seneca wrote): 'Which, I pray you, do you prefer: Daedalus, who invented the saw, or Diogenes, the illustrious man who doubled himself up in a cask and lived in it, and who, on seeing a boy drink from the hollow of his hand, immediately broke his cup, with the exclamation, "Fool that I have been, to carry a superfluity so long"?' The philosopher, in despising the superfluity, must also despise men whose business it was

[1] *De Off.* i. 42.

to construct the superfluous. Such work was but a source of evil as tending to increase, by gratifying, human wants, which it was the task of philosophy to diminish.

Such notions were set in a suitable framework of historic theory—the dream of an original state of innocent nature, from which mankind had degenerated. Seneca tells us of that golden age when kings were philosophers; and Tacitus[1] rises to enthusiasm in describing that happy time when men lived without evil passions or sin or crime, in virtue, innocence, and freedom from the restraints of law. Progress had ruined all this bliss. How innocent, how blessed in truth, how delightful life would be if man desired nothing but what lies on the surface of the earth—in short, what is ready to hand! But the happy stone age did not content insatiable man; ever striving to improve his condition, he dug out gold and other metals, and, taught by the shrewd, but not the wise, became an artisan, set up towns and commerce, in fact was foolish enough to become a civilised being. If Seneca, Pliny, or Tacitus could have had an experience like that of the Gerichtsrath in Hans Andersen's charming fairy tale, and were treated to a personal trial of the times they so admired, there is little doubt they would have become, like the hero of that tale, wiser if not sadder men. Supposing they escaped being thrown into the Tiber as useless old persons, they would very probably have been called on to assist in exposing the infants of the tribe in carrying out the venerable custom of the *ver sacrum*. In those

[1] *Annales*, lib. iii. p. 26.

happy days food was scarce and Malthus's law of population inexorable; the readiest means were therefore taken for reducing the number of consumers. No doubt the rest of the conditions of these good old days would be found to be equally unpleasing on trial. Unfortunately it did not strike ancient writers to make a systematic inquiry into the history of primitive times. They satisfied themselves for the most part, as Rousseau did, with the easier process of evolving virtuous savages out of their own inner consciousness.

The ancient philosophers, who contrasted the vices of their own day with the imaginary perfections of the past, could plead an excuse which our present anti-progressionists cannot justly advance. The ample materials for the comparative study of primitive life, so ably handled by Lubbock, Tyler, Spencer, and a host of British and foreign investigators, were not then within their reach. Can the modern prophets who tell us that civilisation is all wrong, that progress is a phantasm, that 'all the human race is rushing headlong into the sea like the swine possessed by devils,' plead ignorance of the real nature of the times they account blessed? Ample means are at hand whereby with little trouble they may acquire a reasonably true conception of almost any period of history. If you fancy that England reached its highest point in the time of the Tudors and has been going down a steep incline ever since, nothing but prejudice can prevent you from rectifying the error. You can hear the creaking of the rack and the groans of the tortured, and see crowds assembled to witness the agonies of a wretch boiled

alive in Smithfield. A cruel age, full of the hateful bigotry which issued in such deeds as the massacre of St. Bartholomew! An age of lying deceit and Machiavellian politics, in which, perhaps worst of all, hypocritical atheism often committed crimes for which religious fanaticism alone can furnish a miserable apology! The man who cannot see that life in 1886 is better than life in 1586 is a blind leader of the blind. Of course there was a noble life in that age: in what age is it absent? The fearful tenth century, when barbarism had done its worst, was an age prolific in saints. We, Cook's tourists of history, who make little personally-conducted trips into the past, too often fall into the hands of a cicerone who tells us that all is fair as the garden of Eden, or else of some other guide who assures us that it is foul as the valley of Hinnom.

To return to the matter which concerns us at present. The ancients had made up their minds that in the remote past there had been a happy golden age, and that false civilisation and its artificial wants had unfitted mankind for the simple bliss of this early childhood. To the philosopher who believed or affected to believe this theory, the life of the city workman would naturally be a subject of invective, or at least of censure. The artisan and all his works would seem to him the result of greed and the cause of corruption, and the workshop would be as evil a thing to him as a modern factory is to one of our pessimistic prophets. All work, however, was not condemned; on the contrary, the toil of the farmer was honoured, rural labours filled the life of the golden age. Cicero tells us it was considered disgraceful

for free Celts to till their fields with their own hands,[1] and in the chapter of the 'De Officiis' referred to by Dr. Smith he bursts into the praise of agriculture: 'Nihil est agriculturâ melius, nihil uberius, nihil dulcius, nihil homine libero dignius.' The Romans loved to think of Regulus petitioning the Senate to permit his return from Africa; while he was leading a Roman army, instead of guiding his plough, his little farm was uncultivated, and his wife and children in want.[2] The *saeva paupertas* of Curius and Camillus was a thing to be proud of. The picture of Cincinnatus throwing the toga of the senator over the soiled tunic of the peasant, and hurrying from his plough to become Consul, delighted the cultured noble of luxurious Rome as much as it would have shocked the sense of propriety of a rude Gothic lord of the dark ages, had he possessed knowledge enough to read the tale, or if any one had dared to tell him that a noble knight had been degraded by such servile work. Scholars tell us that these old stories, so current in antiquity, of peasant nobles are untrue. It makes no difference whether they are true or false; the ancients believed them and quoted them as examples; so they prove that agricultural labour at least was not accounted derogatory to a freeman. In the same way Marius may not have earned his bread as an agricultural day labourer; modern writers find the idea altogether incongruous, but the ancients did not feel the incongruity, and believed the story.

If some of the ancients then doubted that the work of the artisan was to be accounted entirely *honestum*, it

[1] Mommsen, vol. i. p. 334. [2] Horace, carm. III. v. 13 to 40.

was not as being labour, but because they doubted that such work was rightly to be considered *utile*, a character at once conceded to agriculture. There was another reason which induced Plato, Aristotle, and Xenophon, as Mr. Grote tells us,[1] to view with some disfavour the employment of the city artisan: they thought that the sedentary life and unceasing house work of the artisans were inconsistent with military aptitudes. Such abstract opinions were not much regarded. The practical spirit of the Greeks, indicated in the line of Hesiod, 'No work is a disgrace, but idleness is indeed a disgrace'—a line constantly in the mouth of Socrates, and so frequently quoted by Greek writers—found a clear and suitable expression in the laws of Athens. Herodotus tells us that the laws of Solon punished the habitual idler with death. Mr. Grote considers such severity improbable, but thinks that idleness was severely punished. Every Athenian citizen was obliged to bring up his sons to some trade or profession. The Athenians continued to be active traders till the decline of their city. It is therefore clear that the philosophical censures were little regarded in busy, active, and intelligent Athens; and it is most unlikely that such considerations would have had much force among the money-loving Romans. The abstract speculations of Cicero[2] are merely translations

[1] *History of Greece*, vol. iii. p. 138, cabinet ed.

[2] Some scholars, I fancy, must be grieved by the way in which Herr Mommsen speaks of Cicero. The learned German says that a certain passage in the *De Legibus* is 'a green oasis amidst the fearful desert of that equally empty and voluminous writer' (*History*, vol. iv. p. 511). Cicero is 'a short-sighted egotist' (p. 608). Again: 'By nature a journalist, in the worst sense of the term, abounding, as he himself says, in words, poor

from Greek originals ; and the doctrines, however true, probably exercised less influence on the practical life of the day than our Sunday discourses on the filthiness of lucre produce on the week-day work of the Stock Exchange and the courts of law.

As a striking example of the impotence of merely philosophical notions, no matter how generally acquiesced in, when opposed to the desire of gain, we may take the condemnation of usury. Nothing can be clearer or more emphatic than the ancient reprobation of the practice of lending money on interest. Aristotle indulges in what Mr. Mahaffy calls most arrant nonsense in denouncing usury (' Politics,' i. 10) ; but this nonsense was accepted as philosophy, and the business of money-lending held to be decidedly degrading. Yet Cato himself lent money on usury, and shared in the profits of trade ; though at the time trading was thought unworthy of a person of high rank, and usury disgraceful to any man. Even if ancient society condemned, on moral grounds, the calling of the artisan as strongly as it did that of the usurer—which it certainly did not—can we think that an ignorant Roman workman would reject a profitable industry in obedience to philosophic theory, when we see a lofty moralist like Cato disregarding the dictates of the sages at the bidding of mere greed? It is most unlikely that a skilled Roman mechanic

beyond conception in ideas ' (p. 609). ' Nothing but an advocate, and not a good one ' (p. 609). Most learned Doctor, do not wield that iconoclastic Thor's-hammer of thine so fiercely ! Leave the poor Ciceronians some presentable fragments of their idol in mere mercy. Abuse the Celt and glorify the Teuton as it pleases you, but spare if you can the immortal Tully.

—say, a member of the once highly honoured *collegium fabrorum*—presumably no philosopher, could possibly understand how the avocation of a field labourer, earning probably one third the wages of a *faber*,[1] ought to be considered more respectable than the employment of his own ancient guild. If the censure implied in the words of Cicero had been as strong as it is in truth weak, it would still remain an individual expression of a mere philosophic, or quasi-philosophic, opinion, and, as such, utterly insufficient to prove that freemen despised and had ceased to exercise mechanical arts in Rome.

Dr. Smith supports his argument from Cicero by a general reason for the idleness of the free classes, viz., that 'where slaves perform certain duties, or practise certain arts, such duties or arts will be thought degrading to a freeman.' Such a feeling undoubtedly existed in all modern States having serfs or slaves, but it is extremely doubtful that it had much force in ancient times. If a Roman looked upon slaves in the same way that an American citizen looked upon his 'niggers' in the days of negro slavery, the argument would be a powerful one. But was the slave of the ancient world in the position of the negro? If no free Roman would exercise any calling degraded by slave work, he would be greatly

[1] Some little light is thrown on the comparative rates of wages by an inscription of the time of Diocletian (published in London 1826) given by Cantu (tom. v. p. 253). The wages of a few employments—reduced to French money by Moreau de Jonnès—are given by Cantu:

| | |
|---|---|
| A (town) labourer received per day. . . | 5 fr. 62 c. |
| An ordinary mason, ditto . . . . | 11 ,, 25 ,, |
| A layer of mosaics (floors, &c.), ditto . . | 13 ,, 50 ,, |
| A shoemaker, for making a pair of patrician's shoes (*calcii*) . . . . . | 33 ,, 70 ,, &c. &c. |

hampered in his choice of an occupation. Excepting the professions of advocate and proctor, to which *ingenui* alone were admissible, almost every civil employment was largely filled by slaves and freedmen, was in fact tainted by slavery. Even the *argentarii*, or silversmiths, who exercised the business of bankers, as in the middle ages, though members of a limited and exclusive guild confined to freemen, were not exempt from the intrusion of slaves ; for slaves being frequently employed to carry on their masters' business, seem to have been allowed in their name to trade for themselves on their own *peculium*. Physic was at first almost exclusively in the hands of slaves. Teachers were very generally slaves or freedmen, like Sp. Carvilius, said to have been the first public teacher for money in Rome. Artists of all kinds were very generally slaves. Yet there is no doubt that the professions of Physic, Teaching, and Art were considered liberal, and practised by freemen of all ranks as well as by slaves. Freemen and slaves shared agricultural toil, the business of commercial and professional life, and the pursuits of art and literature. Freedom and slavery were visibly blended together in the daily avocations of life. Artisans alone, we are told, abandoned their lucrative employments from a dislike to share in labours contaminated by some classes of skilled slaves. Dr. Smith credits the lower classes of Roman freemen with a degree of pride, if not philosophic elevation, to which the rest of the Roman world were strangers—if he really wishes us to believe that these proud plebeians preferred a life of abject poverty

rather than suffer the humiliation of working at employments degraded by servile hands.

It is very easy for us to take too low a view of the position of the servile classes in the ancient world. Indeed, it is natural that we should do so, for when we in the present day speak of a slave, we think of the negro or the serf; but such an analogy leads us far from the truth. Among the Romans there was a large class of literary slaves employed by the wealthy as secretaries, librarians, readers, tutors, and so forth. From this class no doubt sprang the slave authors, such as Terence, Caecilius, Phaedrus, and Epictetus. The class of *ordinarii* were men, more or less educated, who occupied positions of trust, managing the incomes and expenditure of their masters like modern stewards. Besides these there were, as before mentioned, professional slaves, physicians, surgeons, architects, and artisans of all classes. In addition to knowledge and skill some slaves possessed wealth. Legally all that the slave earned belonged to his master; but custom stronger than law permitted the slave to retain his *peculium*. So it came to pass that there were frequently very wealthy slaves.[1] Bad, indefensibly bad as was ancient slavery, it was not so harsh in at least one important respect as either serfdom or negro slavery. Hope was by no means cut off. Aristotle taught that slaves should be always encouraged by the hope of freedom.[2] A stern law of caste reduced the mediæval serf almost to the condition of the Indian Sudra.

[1] Becker, *Gallus*, p. 220.

[2] *Politics*, vii. c. 10.

> But our lord, gaining breath, arose and asked
> Milk in the shepherd's lota. 'Ah, my Lord,
> I cannot give thee,' quoth the lad ; 'thou seest
> I am a Sudra, and my touch defiles.'

To such self-abasement the consciousness of the hopeless corruption of his blood reduced the villein of the middle ages, while the black skin of the negro was the visible sign of the curse on the posterity of Ham ! Not so the Roman slave : the policy of Aristotle was fully carried out in his case. If the slave became learned or skilful it was a pecuniary advantage to his master to manumit him. By manumission the slave became free to all the rest of the world, but was still closely bound to his former owner. The freedman was under an obligation to share his profits with his patron, and ingratitude was visited with the severest penalties. A number of clever, honest, and wealthy freedmen were of great pecuniary advantage to the patron—a source of revenue and a safe means of investing money in trades, which could hardly be carried on by a noble in his own name.

This is, no doubt, the reason of the great wealth of many freedmen. Pliny tells us that three freedmen living in the reign of Claudius—Pallas, Callistus, and Narcissus—were each more wealthy than Croesus.[1] Trusty and clever men employed in trading, to a great extent with the capital of others lent on interest, were on the high road to attain vast wealth. The Roman slave was not, therefore, in the position of the negro or the serf; the road to freedom was open to him, and, if he possessed ability, was even easy. As caste distinc-

[1] *Hist. Nat.* xxxiii. c. 47.

tion broke down, there were few positions the rich freedman might not aspire to, and none that his son could not attain. We read of Augustus being on intimate terms with Vedius Pollio, a Roman knight of vast wealth, the son of a freedman ; and this Pollio seems to have had nothing to recommend him except his riches.[1] In the later Empire we see the son of a freedman, if not a freedman himself, ascend the throne of the Cæsars in the person of Diocletian, perhaps the ablest Emperor who ever ruled the Roman world. There was nothing in the position of the slave under the Roman Empire which could rouse in the mind of the common freeman that contempt for the slave and his work with which 'the mean white' regarded the negro, or the scorn felt for the serf and servile work which found expression in the angry scream of the monks of Molème. 'Is it because we have renounced the world that we should be asked to employ ourselves in servile and unbeseeming pursuits, like vile slaves?'[2] Mean whites and mediæval freemen would certainly feel degraded by performing the labour of a negro or serf ; but there is no reason to suppose that, in a state of society so entirely different, a Roman aerarian would share in such a feeling.

Besides unduly under-estimating the slave, there is also a danger of unduly over-estimating the position of the common freeman, from the tendency to apply

[1] Seneca, *de Na.* iii. 40. A more creditable friendship was that of Augustus for Timagenes, originally a slave cook and afterwards a learned historian, the loss of whose Gallic history is the more regretted when we read the meagre notice of it in Ammianus Mar.

[2] Ordericus Vitalis, vol. iii. p. 44. Ed. Bohn.

modern exemplars to a society so fundamentally different in many respects as that of the Roman Empire. Below the free artisans, as M. de Coulanges tells us, there was a class of freemen little esteemed by others, and who thought very meanly of themselves. In the habits of life there was little distinction between the lower freemen and the lower slaves. It was at one time sought to make a difference in dress to distinguish the slaves from the freemen of the lower class, in the same way as the different orders of the upper classes were distinguished from each other. But the Senate refused to sanction the innovation, on the ground that it would be very dangerous to the State to permit the slaves to know how numerous they were.[1] Nothing can show more clearly than this how blended together, and almost undistinguishable, were the lower classes of both the slave and free.

That domestic slavery, at the time when every great household contained slave artisans, did affect very injuriously the well-being of the free artisans of the guilds is highly probable. Cantu's[2] remarks on this subject seem reasonable in a high degree. 'The corporations of free workmen, very ancient in Rome, did not thrive in competition with servile domestic industries. Each rich citizen made at home all that was required for the wants or luxuries of his house. The new men, however, who flocked to Rome found, though slowly, that a stuff or utensil of any kind purchased in a shop was cheaper than an article manufactured at home by their slaves. This caused domestic industries to be abandoned, in-

[1] Seneca, *de Clem.* i. 24.

[2] Paris, 1859, vol. v. p. 251.

creased the number of free artisans, and aided the growth of that system of equality introduced by the emperors. But it was not desirable to give this crowd of artisans the liberty of which the country people had been deprived ; so, under pretext of regulating the trades, each man was bound to his calling, as the *coloni* were bound to the soil.' Cantu is strongly opposed to imperialism, and perhaps takes a harsh view of the Roman polity ; but he sees very clearly that the imperial system favoured the development of the guilds, and he never gives the slightest support to the absurd notion that all freemen had become idlers at the close of the Empire. The policy of the Empire was directed to the regulation of trade, to making every one work, and, by becoming wealthy himself, to enrich the State. The wisest means were by no means taken ; but that, such as they were, they were at least partially successful is shown by the vast wealth which attracted the barbarians, and which they so effectually squandered.

## CHAPTER IV.

### EFFECTS ON THE LOWER CLASSES OF AGRARIAN QUESTIONS, AND OF THE 'FRUMENTARIA.'

So far we have seen that the supposed rejection of their ancient industries by the Roman plebeians is based on, 1. The influence on the popular mind of a certain school of philosophy; 2. The growing pride of the lower classes, which induced them to shrink from degrading labour similar to that of slaves. But the fancied influence of these moral causes is not the sole or even the most influential reason leading so many writers to adopt the hypothesis of the complete idleness of the lower classes. The common notion of the political attitude of the plebeians is far more powerful in spreading this view among our guides. When we strive to picture to ourselves the populace of Rome, we are told to look on a surging mass of riotous folk, clamouring unceasingly for bread and games (*panem et circenses*). We naturally think of such a people as we would of the proletariat of a great modern city, who, with ample opportunities for honest labour, preferred to spend their time in demands for the property of others, instead of earning a property, or at least a decent subsistence, for themselves

The natural, and probably just, judgment we should form of a society in which such communistic movements were habitual would be that the masses were thoroughly corrupted by idleness. When Sir T. Erskine May states that the Roman free people despised industry, and that all the manual labour of society was performed by slaves,[1] he obviously relies on moral causes to explain the want of industry. On the other hand, the same author writes, 'The poorer classes of citizens of Rome were those whose wants were supplied by distributions of corn, whose idle tastes were gratified by games and bloody spectacles of wild beasts and gladiators, and whose cupidity was inflamed by constant agitation for agrarian laws.'[2] 'The class which ought to have been a source of strength and stability was the cause of demoralisation, disorders, and dangers to the State.' In all this he relies on quite different causes, and on influences of a political character.

It is unnecessary to speak of the purely moral question of the love of circus games; it is evidently a remnant of that delight in cruelty which at best lies latent in every uncultivated nature. The man of refined feeling has, as Mr. Sully tells us,[3] cast off many of the pleasures of the boor. He cannot, for example, experience the latter's pure delight in witnessing bodily suffering. It was long before mankind advanced enough in culture to forsake these pleasures. A *combat à outrance* in the middle ages, when many a gentle knight and valiant squire gave up their souls to God to prove their

[1] *Democracy in Europe*, vol. i. p. 173. [2] *Ibid.* p. 172.
[3] *Pessimism*, p. 363.

prowess and love of their ladies, was a truly gratifying sight. 'A passage of arms' in which many fell was marked with a white stone in the memories of our ancestors, and they long continued to find pleasure in bloody and cruel games. Out of the love of such sights the Romans had not advanced; they had, however, made a great step before the end of the Empire by the abandonment of gladiatorial shows.

As it is the demand for bread and not for games that really concerns us, we are here supposed to be brought by it face to face with Roman communism. The distributions of corn introduced by Caius Gracchus were, according to Sir Erskine May, a dangerous form of communism.[1] This hankering for the property of other people, as the constant demand for agrarian laws and distributions of corn are usually represented to be, at first sight strongly inclines one to believe in the idleness of a people which seems merely a rapacious and turbulent rabble.

In order to get a juster idea of this matter it is necessary to take a rapid retrospective glance at a great subject, the history of land-owning at Rome. It is only recently that it has become possible to take such a survey. Nothing approaching to truth was known on this subject, or indeed could be known, till Niebuhr made the first step, in the early part of the present century,[2] by getting some idea of the true meaning of the *ager publicus*. But no adequate knowledge was gained until the labours of scholars, pursuing the comparative

[1] *Op. cit.* vol. i. p. 180.

[2] See *Lectures on Roman Hist.* vol. i. p. 251. Ed. Bohn.

method, cast a light on the early institutions of the different branches of the Aryan family. In the subsequent sketch of results I shall chiefly follow M. de Laveleye.[1]

Full ownership of land, both with the ancient Germans and the ancient Romans, was restricted within very narrow limits. The German freeman possessed his *Hof* and enclosure in full possession; it was emphatically his own (*eigen*).[2] In the same way each Roman freeman, or patrician, or member of the *populus* (for the word *populus* changed its meaning completely in course of time) possessed his *haeredium* in full Quiritary ownership ('dominium ex jure Quiritium'). The *haeredium* of the patrician was of very small extent, as in Germany; in Rome it was only two *jugera*, about one acre and a quarter of our measure. In addition to his *haeredium* or homestead, each patrician, or member of the *populus*, or full citizen (*civis optimo jure*) had a right to use the public lands (*ager publicus*, or folkland) belonging to the *civitas*, and he alone had such a right. The patrician, however, never obtained full Quiritary dominion in the portion of the public lands he possessed; his right therein was called *possessio*, a temporary and theoretically revocable right of occupancy. Below the patricians and members of the *populus* was a lower class of freemen who had at first no claim to any share in the public land—plebeians in Rome, *Hinterlassen* in Germany. At a very early date the plebeians (corresponding no doubt to some advance in their status,

[1] *Primitive Property*. English ed. by Marriott & Leslie, pp. 164, 174.
[2] Morier, *Cobden Club Essays on Land Tenure* p. 281.

for freedom in early societies was associated with rights over land) obtained a legal estate in a portion of the *ager publicus*. The plebeian lot was generally seven *jugera*, about four and a half acres ; a larger portion than the patrician *haeredium*, because the plebeian, having no further right to share in the public land, had to receive a quantity sufficient for his support.[1]

Plutarch attributes to Numa a distribution of the public land among the poorer citizens. Perhaps this may be only an instance of the same tendency we note in our writers on English history of the pre-critical period to father on Alfred the Great all our most remarkable institutions ; but in any case there can be no doubt that from very ancient times the right of all freemen to some share of the public lands was conceded and acted on. The great struggle in Roman history was the land question, as between the patricians and the plebeians, the nobles endeavouring to keep the whole of the *ager publicus* in their hands, and the people asserting their right to a share.

The Licinian law, B.C. 367, checked for some time the continual absorption of the public lands by the patricians. No citizen was for the future to be permitted to hold more than five hundred *jugera* (about three hundred acres) of public land ; this law of the five hundred *jugera* is always quoted with admiration by Varro, Pliny, and Columella.[2] For about a century this Licinian law prevented the growth of those large estates which were cultivated by slaves or used for grazing, to the manifest injury of a military State, whose army

[1] Laveleye, p. 165. [2] *Ibid.* p. 167.

should consist of freemen drawn mainly from the class of small landowners. Probably the economic causes producing these large estates lay in great part beyond the reach of any law; but such was not the opinion of the day, and the legislation of the Gracchi, B.C. 133, was intended to put an end to the increase of great properties, *latifundia*, which had become a source of alarm to all patriots. The reform introduced by these statesmen was mainly an enforcement of the Licinian law; it probably deserved the praise it received from Plutarch, 'Never was a gentler or milder law enacted against such great injustice and avarice.' But it was all too harsh for noble greed, and the miserable fate of the Gracchi remains a lasting monument of aristocratic lawlessness. Such a statement as that quoted above from Sir Erskine May's work, that 'the cupidity of the lower classes was inflamed by constant agitation for agrarian laws,' is likely to cause a misconception of the real state of affairs. The agitation was supported by every person who had any pretensions to be considered either a statesman or a patriot.

The legal right of freemen to a share of the public domains was unquestionable, and the necessity for a division of the land was manifest, and acknowledged by all, except by the majority of the patricians, who clung with short-sighted greed to the lands they had usurped. The question really was, how could so useful a reform be brought about? Could the important class of small land-owners be maintained under the unfavourable economic conditions of society? The old plebeian allotment of seven *jugera* was manifestly insufficient to

support a family. Mommsen calculates from the ancient authorities that the average yield, deducting seed corn, was twenty *modii* for each *jugerum*, or 140 *modii* for seven *jugera*.[1] As the severe taskmaster Cato allows fifty-one *modii* of corn for the support of each slave, which is the produce of two and a half *jugera*, seven *jugera* of corn-land would be clearly mere starvation for a family.

On this point I think M. de Laveleye open to a slight criticism. He quotes Pliny's report of the saying of Manlius Curius Dentatus, that any one who was not content with seven *jugera* was a dangerous citizen. But he does not notice Pliny's comment on the story.[2] Pliny was clearly puzzled, as well he might be, to explain the extraordinary fertility which made seven *jugera* suffice for the maintenance of a family. Roman agriculture never rose above the level of the 'three-field system,' involving a triennial fallow, and in early times there was an alternate fallow ; so the four and a half acres of the peasant was at once practically reduced to two or three acres. The yield, too, was miserably low at best ; a five-fold produce, five times the amount of the seed sown, was considered a fair crop. Pliny's explanations—he gives three—are scarcely satisfactory. He tells us that, in the grand old days of Curius

[1] *History of Rome*, vol. i. p. 195.

[2] 'Haec autem mensura plebei post exactos reges assignata est. Quaenam ergo tantae ubertatis causa erat? Ipsorum tunc manibus Imperatorum colebantur agri : ut fas est credere, gaudente terrâ vomere laureato et triumphali aratore : sive illi eâdem curâ semina tractabant, quâ bella ; eâdemque diligentiâ arva disponebant, quâ castra : sive honestis manibus omnia laetius proveniunt, quoniam et curiosius fiunt' (*Hist. Nat.* xviii. 4).

Dentatus, generals who had triumphed cultivated land with their own hands; it is therefore reasonable to suppose that the soil was more productive, rejoicing in being tilled by a laureled ploughshare and a crowned ploughman. If this is not satisfactory, you may consider that these generals brought the same skill with which they conducted their armies and formed their camps to bear on the cultivation of their little plots. And finally we may assume that all things thrive better by the labour of honourable hands, because the work is more scrupulously performed. None of these explanations leaves us much wiser than before. Marius, even though Juvenal may have erred about his early life when he tells us that the hero—

Solebat
Poscere mercedes, alieno lassus aratro,[1]

was still a countryman with a practical knowledge of rural life, and he places the minimum amount of land on which a man could live at fourteen *jugera*, or about nine acres. Marius gave this amount to each of his soldiers after the African campaign, saying, 'Please God there be no Roman who finds a portion of earth too small for him that is sufficient for his subsistence.'[2]

Perhaps the explanation of the ancient sufficiency of these plebeian lots of seven *jugera* may be that in the old days enclosures may not have come into vogue; that Roman agriculture had in fact passed through a transition period such as the sixteenth century in

[1] *Sat.* viii. 245. [2] Laveleye, p. 170.

England, with as little notice by historians in one case as the other. Unfortunately the annals of the poor, the records of the weal and woe of the vast majority of mankind, are scanty and confused. At a certain point of social advance in every country, the economic advantages of several, or enclosed, property in land compel its introduction. In primitive Rome, and in the agricultural communes of mediæval England, one sees dimly the same elements: the small enclosed space (*haeredium*—'close'), the agricultural land (*ager publicus*—'field'), pasturage (*pascua publica*—'common'). Each freeman in England had or ought to have had, appurtenant to his house and close, his strip in 'the field' and his right of grazing on 'the common.' But enclosure, necessary though it was for the general good, was an evil thing for the poor man.

> A lord given to private affection
> Letting the poor man an old rotten house
> Which hath to the same profits commodious,
> As close, and common, with land in the field;
> But note well here how the poor man is peeled;
> The house he shall have and a garden plot,
> But stand he must to the reparation.
> Close, common, nor land falleth none to his lot,
> That best might help to his sustentation.[1]

It seems very possible that something of this sort happened at Rome; that the inevitable 'peeling' of the poor man may have deprived him of a right of user in the *pascua publica*, making a parcel of land formerly able to support a family when eked out by

[1] Sir W. Forrest, *Pleasaunt Poesie of Princelie Practyse*, A.D. 1548. Early English Text Soc. 1878.

rights of commonage, quite insufficient when these rights had been withdrawn.

Whatever may have been the cause, the old plebeian allotments were now considered quite inadequate in extent, and the agrarian system of the Gracchi was far more liberal. Thirty *jugera* of public land were assigned to citizens and Italian allies, to be held at a moderate rent payable to the State, the holder being bound to cultivate his land, and not permitted to alienate it. The same quantity of thirty *jugera* seems to have been the allotment of a veteran on his retirement from the army, and the outfit of seed corn makes it probable that the 'three-field system' was the method of agriculture to be pursued by these military farmers.[1] It is likely then that the same method was to be pursued in the holdings under the land scheme of the Gracchi. There would thus be in each farm twenty *jugera* under cultivation, and ten *jugera* fallow in each year. Assuming the yield of a *jugerum* to be twenty *modii*, subtracting seed, and the price of a *modius* of corn to be what it is stated to have been in Cicero's time, about three sesterces, we get for the total value of the corn crop per year about 1,200 sesterces. Or assuming the value of the *sestertium* (1,000 sesterces) to be 8*l.* 17*s.* 1*d.*, we have in our money 10*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.* to pay rent and other outgoings, and to support the tenant and his family. As at this time the rent of a small house in Rome was, we are told, about 44*l.*, the purchasing power of money could not have been so much

[1] Seebohm, *The English Village Community*, p. 275.

higher than it is now, in that respect at least, as to make this income a very splendid provision.[1]

Nor does it seem at all probable that a skilled artisan, belonging to one of the guilds, would be in any hurry to exchange his position in a busy and wealthy city for the life of a small country farmer, *adscriptus glebae*. But, willing or unwilling, the citizen was given but a short time to turn the matter over in his mind. Caius Gracchus fell B.C. 121; two years after his death the allotment commission was abolished, and the holders of the *ager publicus* were confirmed in their titles, a quit rent payable to the State being imposed on them. This rent was to be applied to the benefit of the Roman citizens, 'apparently forming part of the fund for the distribution of corn.' Eight years afterwards this rent was abolished, B.C. 111.[2] As the plebeian settlers had been permitted, and probably forced, to sell their allotments, the agrarian laws of the Gracchi had passed away. The system of *latifundia* prospered, and Italy decayed.

Looked at broadly, what is the fact underlying all these agrarian laws? Simply the assertion of an old Aryan principle (if it be not one common to all social organisation), that every free member of the commune, whether it were called *civitas*, *Dorf*, *ham*, or Irish *dun*, should have a share in the land belonging to his commune. Wherever an advanced civilisation had introduced the principle of division of labour, it is clearly impolitic that a skilled workman should continue to share in the land, to the exclusion of the husbandman: that

[1] Mommsen, vol. iii. p. 416. [2] *Ibid.* vol. iii. p. 134.

he should do so would be an obvious loss to the community. But it would be unfair that the workman should have no benefit from his undoubted right ; in this way those *frumentationes*, or distributions of corn at a reduced price to the freemen of the *civitas*, must have appeared both just and reasonable to those ancient men, though to us they may appear disastrous, and simply a mischievous form of communism ; they were in fact the expression, or modification, of a primitive form of communism, which they may be considered as to some extent replacing.

The distributions of corn were by no means primarily intended for the relief of distress. The only questions asked any man who presented himself to demand his monthly portion of five *modii* of corn were, was he *paterfamilias*, and was he a Roman citizen ; if he possessed these qualifications he got his allowance of corn on paying a fixed price, about half the common market rate, no matter what was his wealth or station. We are told that Piso, a consular man, demanded and received his corn like the humblest citizen. Cæsar, when he obtained supreme power, lowered the number of recipients from 320,000 to 150,000 by causing a strict inquiry to be made into their titles as Roman citizens, though no doubt the 170,000 non-burgesses struck off the list contained a far larger proportion of men in absolute want. It was natural, almost inevitable, that such a system should tend to assume an eleemosynary character. The poor exist everywhere, nowhere more abundantly than in wealthy cities. Poverty is the shadow of wealth. With the imperfect means of land carriage

then existing, the food supply of ancient Rome necessarily depended on 'the sacred fleet,' the grain ships from Africa, Gaul and the East. Navigation was slow and uncertain, and restricted to a few months in each year. Under such conditions the prices of corn must have fluctuated to an extent ruinous to the poor; so the system, primarily intended for the distribution of corn to citizens as such, must come to be employed as a means of relieving poverty. But primarily the cry for corn was not the whine of a beggar for alms, but essentially the demand of a freeman for a right. If the citizen did not get land, which in many cases he would not be very anxious to obtain, and which others were assuredly most anxious to withhold from him, he had a clear, and what to most men of the time appeared an unexceptionable, right to obtain at least a share in the produce of land.

The nobles agreed to pay a rent for their ever-growing *latifundia*; but, as usual in such cases, the rent-payers, when an opportunity afforded itself, abolished the rent. The *frumentationes*, however, remained, though for the future drawn almost wholly from provincial tributes. The townsfolk, as long as they got their monthly five *modii* of cheap corn, could not be expected to examine very closely into the means by which the senators kept up the supply. Every one was satisfied—the rich grew richer by the yield of their vast and ever-increasing estates; Rome and the other great towns, inhabited for the greater part of the year by these wealthy persons, throve exceedingly; business was good, no doubt. But in spite of all this prosperity,

as wealth increased the ugly shadow grew also. The poor, those crippled by infirmity, vice, and misfortunes, became more numerous, and the *frumentationes* gradually came to be viewed as *congiaria*, doles, or free gifts of corn, such as appear late in imperial times. The right to claim these gifts of corn still belonged and was confined to citizens inscribed in a tribe. As Roman citizenship was extended, a new system was introduced: each citizen under the rank of senator received a *tessera*, or ticket entitling the holder to a share in the distributions of corn or bread. The holder could sell or bequeath this ticket by will. The lawful possession of a *tessera* seems to have been a proof of citizenship. In legal language *emere tesseram*, 'to buy a ticket,' was synonymous with *emere tribum*, 'to purchase admission into a tribe.'[1] Thus the right of each citizen to share in the produce of land, though his right to obtain the land itself had been abrogated, was continued to the end of the Empire.

It must have frequently occurred that want of funds, parsimony, or a sense of the mischief which the artificial cheapening of corn caused to the agriculture of Italy, led rulers to attempt to withhold these distributions, whether *frumentationes* or *congiaria*. In such cases there would be no doubt a popular storm, much rioting and shouting for bread. It is unjust, however, to confound these mutineers with modern communists clamouring for the property of others; the Roman must have felt that he was resisting an attempt to plunder him of property to which he was clearly and

[1] George Long, Article 'Frumentariae Leges,' *Dict. Class. Ant.*

incontestably entitled. Nor is it likely that the rights of the inheritors or purchasers of the *tesserae* would have been respected, were it not for more or less vigorous efforts to maintain them by the owners. No doubt the system was fraught with evils both economic and social, but it cannot be seriously contended that the purchaser of a *tessera*, conferring on the owner the right to obtain sixty *modii*, or the equivalent in bread, per annum, became on account of such purchase an incorrigible idler. It was no great provision, this *scabiosum far*, as Persius calls it;[1] it must be remembered that the niggardly Cato allowed fifty-one *modii* for the maintenance of each of his wretched slaves.[2] The possession of a bare security against actual starvation by no means removes motives for exertion with the majority of civilised men, more especially in a society so saturated with love of money as was that of ancient Rome.

There was idleness, of course; perhaps there was more of it than in a modern civilised society: vice had its martyrs then as now. St. Ambrose, in one of his sermons, gives a picture of the degraded condition of

[1] *Sat.* v. 74.

[2] I may note the following household receipt by Cato for 'household wine' as an illustration of his strict economy: 'Vinum familiae per hiemem qui utatur. Musti quadrantalia X in dolium indito, aceti acris quadrantalia II. Eodem infundito sapae quadrantalia II, aquae dulcis quadrantalia II. Haec rude misceto ter in dies V continuos. Eo addito aquae marinae veteris sextarios LXIV, et operculum in dolium imponito, et oblinito dies X. Hoc vinum durabit tibi usque ad solstitium. Si quid superfuerit post solstitium, acetum acerrimum et pulcherrimum erit' (Cato, *de Re Rust.* c. 104). Shade of Mrs. Squeers, your treacle and brimstone was nectar to this 'slave wine.' Stale sea-water!

some of the working class, which may be usefully compared with Ammianus Marcellinus.[1] 'You see men seated at the doors of taverns who have not a tunic on their backs, who have not the means of life for to-morrow, and who settle the affairs of emperors and states. What shall I say? They believe themselves to reign and to command armies; poor in reality, they become rich in their drunkenness; they lavish gold, they dispute about the public good, they build cities, they who have not the wherewithal to pay their tavern bills. Heated with wine, they know not what they say. Wealthy when drunk, when they have slept themselves sober they know they are beggars. They drink in one day the labour of many.'

Such miserable, idle pothouse politicians are not quite unknown in modern times; but it would be a very great mistake to say that all workmen are such; and a similar mistake is made, I think, by those who would persuade us that all free Roman workmen were drunken and debauched men, like those described by Ammianus Marcellinus and St. Ambrose. Nothing is more common than harsh censures of the poor; the majority of the writings that have come down to us are, of course, on the aristocratic side; in a falling state the evils of the day are apt to be attributed by such writers to the idleness and vice of the lower orders; so it is natural, and by no means difficult, to draw an ugly picture of the *profanum vulgus.*

My limited reading has not enabled me to bring together a complete picture of the social condition of

[1] Ampère, *Histoire Littéraire*, vol. i. p. 385.

Rome at the close of the Empire ; but I think the facts stated are sufficient to justify the view that the theory of its universal corruption is usually stated with at least very gross exaggeration. We see the working classes distributed into a large number of regulated guilds. Cantù points out that the number of free workmen was vastly increased by the decay of domestic industries carried on by slaves ; that the growth of the artisan class was favoured by the imperial system, though their personal liberty was restricted by regulations binding them to their trades, as the *coloni* were bound to the soil. The notion we get of the industrial aspect of imperial Rome in this respect is strictly comparable to that of modern cities down to recent times—trades carried on by associated workmen under the regulation of their own elected officers, the son, as a rule, following the business of the father. This similarity would be the more striking if in Rome, as in old towns familiar to us, there were separate quarters for the different trades. This seems likely. M. Ampère tells us there was a shoemakers' quarter,[1] and the quarter of the *argentarii* is often mentioned by the satirists. Above the workmen was a class in great part sprung from them—traders and others, struggling upwards in a society in which wealth determined station ; eager money-makers and seekers after social distinction, envying those above, despising those below them, and bickering about precedence.

> At Novius collega gradu post me sedet uno,
> Namque est ille, pater quod erat meus.[2]

[1] *L'Empire Romain à Rome*, tom. i. p. 194. [2] Hor. *Sat.* I. vi. 40.

Above these was the serener circle of the men of ancient wealth, cultured, and by no means devoid of public spirit. The whole scene is one not unfamiliar to us: why distort it by taking too literally the scoffs of satirists, or the moans of saints sighing for a state of perfection the world has never seen? Both satirists and saints caricature and lament the vices of modern life; but common-sense tells us that, after all, the world is not so black as it is painted by them.

It may be that we run some risk of spoiling the artistic picture of the fall of Rome by not blackening the Romans sufficiently. The high lights of barbaric virtues are somewhat dingy, to say the least, and some judicious darkening of the background is perhaps required to give them much scenic effect. But what is lost in the picturesque is gained in historic truth.

We ought not to permit a dislike, however just, of what we know as imperialism to blind us to the real merits of the Roman Empire, and the inestimable services it rendered to human progress. It secured to humanity the blessings of peace for a long period, and over a wide area; it spread the knowledge of rational law, and broke down the tyranny of mere class rule; it accustomed men in many lands to civilisation, 'the art of living together in civil society.' The government which did all this did not rest on mere force. If we consider the military system of the Empire, the most striking point is the smallness of its standing army. Germany at present maintains in time of peace about one soldier for every ninety-two heads, France about one for every seventy-four, while Rome was content

with a force which cannot have much exceeded one for every three hundred. In this respect England alone among modern nations may compare with Rome.[1] It is impossible to believe that the thirty legions of Rome were able by mere force to keep in slavery the hundred millions of imperial subjects; and this was the more impossible in ancient times, before the invention of fire-arms, as the soldier in those days had no such strongly marked superiority over the townsman or the peasant. The Empire did not avail itself of the methods of modern despotism, as M. de Coulanges tells us: 'The imperial authority did not place a representative in every village. It did not appoint a multitude of judges and receivers of imposts, and did not dispose of an infinite number of offices. It did not even concern itself at all about the administration of the police. Still less did it think it necessary for the government of society to direct the education of youth. It did not nominate the members of the provincial priesthood. All the means to which modern States have recourse were unknown to it; it had no need of them.'[2]

None of these things were uncared for, but the management of them was in the hands of local authorities. A vast and orderly empire, almost devoid of soldiers (for most of the legionaries were employed on the frontiers in keeping the barbarians at bay), with most of the functions of government in the hands of the local bodies of each country, is the real picture of the Roman Empire in its palmy days. Such a system of government was obviously founded on opinion, but not the

[1] Fustel de Coulanges, *Institutions*, &c. p. 82. [2] *Ibid.*

mere opinion of self-interest of the soldiery, but of its various subjects. In this matter Hume does scanty justice to the Roman Empire when he says, 'The Soldan of Egypt or the Emperor of Rome might drive his harmless subjects like brute beasts against their sentiments and inclinations; but he must at least have led his mamelukes or prætorian bands, like men, by their opinions.' The opinion on which the power of Rome rested was that of the great mass of its subjects, not merely of prætorian bands; and when that opinion passed away from it, the system declined and finally fell: such is the fate of every form of government which has ever existed.

The fall of the Western Empire no more proves the corruption of the Western peoples than the maintenance of the Empire of the East proves the virtues of the Eastern. How often do we find people thinking that the Empire fell with Romulus Augustulus; yet what notion can be more misleading? Very distinctly the Roman Empire lived on. The power of Justinian fell in time to the Isaurian dynasty. Never was such a succession of able sovereigns seen following each other on any other throne.[1] Then came the Basilian dynasty, a period of two centuries, marked by internal prosperity and external success. During this period 'respect for the administration of justice pervaded society more generally than it had ever done at any preceding period of the history of the world.'[2] Thus, hemmed in by barbarism, civilisation and the Empire lived on—cut off increasingly from intercourse with the barbarised West,

[1] Finlay, *History of Greece*, vol. ii. p. 9. [2] *Ibid.* p. 10.

living an internal life like China; necessarily therefore stationary, but by no means dead.

We are told that the Germans brought a magnificent contribution to the building up of our modern world. In thinking of the barbarians, M. de Montalembert burst out into exclamations of triumph. We have seen [1] that he attributed to them the restoration of liberty and honour, which he thinks had been lost to Rome and the world since the reign of Augustus. Guizot maintained that the modern spirit of individual liberty was the gift of the Germans; while Cantu agrees with the Christian writers who greeted the Gothic invasion as a renewal of youth. But great as are these blessings which we are told the German spirit conferred directly on the modern world—an idealistic instinct, imagination, poetry, chivalry, liberty, honour, and the sense of individual freedom—to the ultramontane school, they are as nothing when compared with the negative benefits which flowed from the overthrow of ancient civilisation. The destruction of the spirit of legalism and of materialistic philosophy was necessary, so as to make room for papal theocracy and Catholic dogma. To clerical writers the middle ages appear a favoured epoch, because for the comparatively brief period of two centuries and a half, from the pontificate of Gregory VII. till that of Boniface VIII., Christian theocracy was an almost realised ideal.

Mr. Herbert Spencer, in his 'Study of Sociology,' has given many illustrations of the difficulty of dealing with sociological questions, due to distortion of facts

[1] Above, p. 16.

arising from prejudice or bias. No subject has been so injuriously affected by the different classes of bias as history. An element of dishonesty, or something akin to it, has been introduced into historical discussions by 'the bias of patriotism,' even where the disputants are very honest men. No subject is too small for the display of eager partisanship, and the doubtful and more than doubtful casuistry to which it gives birth. The myth of William Tell has a large literature of its own, and that connected with the authorship of the 'Imitation of Christ' is truly stupendous. When we come to great questions, such as the supreme historical question, the fall of the Empire of the West, it is hard indeed to approach the subject with unbiassed mind. From whom are we to get our data? From no 'member of the Teutonic race' with the flattering vision of ancestral virtues and the Germanic golden age floating before his mind; from no theologian considering the subject as a providential means of bringing about the logical consequence of his principle, a theocratic government of the world; from no politician strong in the belief of the efficacy of some favourite régime: none of these do or can treat the facts in a colourless way. They are bound by their preconceptions to select their facts and spell out their theories. If we subtract from the long list of historical writers all that fall under these various classes, we have very few indeed left to be relied on as our guides.

When the Empire lay a-dying, the Church, or rather a section of it, was longing for the advent of the barbarians. Disgusted with the hardness of heart and

semi-paganism of many of the Romans—'multi incredulitatis paganicae aliquid in se habent'[1]—the more enthusiastic, such as Salvian, hailed the Germans as more hopeful material for spiritual life than the cultured, busy, and worldly men of Gaul and Italy. 'The Church not only did not fear the barbarians,' says M. Sepet, 'but she had faith in their future; she saw in these fresh souls a soil propitious for the sowing of the divine seed of the Gospel, and destined to produce marvellous fruit, which she could no longer hope from the hearts of the Romans, withered by the most protracted and most stifling servitude the world has ever seen.'

Alas! the seed was like that sown in stony places, or like that which fell among thorns: 'the thorns sprung up and choked them.' The zealots had their wish: the barbarians came, the sowing was easy, their fickle ignorance made the work of conversion a simple task; but the marvellous fruit those fresh young hearts yielded was centuries of crimes, which have left a lasting stigma on the ages of faith.

Gibbon tells us that the age of the Antonines was the happiest time the human race ever knew, and the fact stated by the great historian has not been controverted. The civilised world was at peace, and in the enjoyment of a large share of the blessings which peace affords. Gaul was the happiest of the Roman provinces; its population had not outrun the means of subsistence afforded by a fertile soil and a tolerably good system of agriculture. The province had abundant resources, and was wealthy and cultured. The Romans had established

[1] Salvian, i. 3.

great educational institutions throughout the country, and there was an organised system of public elementary instruction. The laws were good, and justice seems to have been fairly administered. The municipal institutions flourished, and what has been called 'Home-rule' in the Empire afforded opportunities for an active public life.

But when the rejuvenators had established themselves, what was the condition of that once happy province? Dean Milman has described it: 'It is difficult to conceive a more dark and odious state of society than that of France under her Merovingian kings, the descendants of Clovis, as described by Gregory of Tours. In the conflict or coalition of barbarism with Roman Christianity, barbarism had introduced into Christianity all its ferocity, with none of its generosity or magnanimity; its energy shows itself in atrocity of cruelty and even of sensuality. Christianity had given to barbarism hardly more than its superstition, and its hatred of heretics and unbelievers. Throughout, assassinations, parricides, and fratricides mingle with adulteries and rapes. The cruelty might seem the mere inevitable result of this violent and unnatural fusion; but the extent to which this cruelty spread throughout the whole society almost surpasses belief.'[1]

Dean Milman was a believer in the primitive virtues of the Germanic character; so he seems to have been somewhat troubled in mind by the terrible state of things he had to describe. 'The strength of the Teutonic character, when it had once burst the bonds of habitual or traditionary restraint, might seem to disdain

[1] Milman, *Latin Christianity*, vol. i. p. 365.

easy and effeminate vice and to seek a kind of wild zest in the indulgence of lust, by mingling it with other violent passions, rapacity and inhumanity.'[1]

It is a common and easily verified fact that less civilised peoples when brought in contact with highly civilised peoples are more prone to borrow the evil than the good. The larger life of the more highly developed society affords an opportunity for indulgence in vices to which all but men of exceptional strength of will are likely to fall victims; and the exceptional men are very exceptional indeed in uncultivated nations or classes. The more unequal the social development of the two peoples brought in contact, the more rapid and complete will be the moral deterioration of the inferior community. The condition of the German conquerors of Gaul was vastly inferior to that of the conquered natives, and utter ruin was the result. In Italy the Goths were more civilised; they were in fact the most civilised of the Teutonic nations, because they had been longer and in more intimate connection with Rome than any of the others. Hence the Gothic conquest of Italy, though it certainly injured culture, did not produce the utter miseries which followed the Frankish conquest of Gaul. Italy's real hour of trial came with the Lombards.

The intellectual ruin of Gaul was very rapid and nearly total. Only sixty years separate the death of Sidonius Apollinaris from the birth of St. Gregory of Tours. At the former epoch there were wealthy Gauls, like the rich Protadius, who devoted their leisure to writing the history of their native country; others who,

[1] Milman, *Latin Christianity*, vol. i. p. 366.

like Sidonius himself,[1] only wrote verses and letters to their friends. The histories are lost, but some of the works of Sidonius remain to attest the kind of life the cultured Gaul then led. The literature which remains may be marked by triviality, but it proves an interest in letters, and shows that even then, among barbarian troubles, life was tolerable enough to the Christian Roman provincials.[2] Compare this state of things with the condition in the time of St. Gregory of Tours. In the preface to his history the good Bishop exclaims, 'Alas for our age! The study of letters has perished from our midst, and the man is no longer to be found who can commit to writing the events of the time.'

With the decline of law and the decline of knowledge came the decline of morality and religion. An able and learned writer tells us: 'France was towards the end of the sixth century a byword throughout Europe for immorality and irreligion.'[3]

Less than three centuries before, that 'pagan monk,' as Dean Milman calls him, the Emperor Julian, stern stoic as he was, confessed his admiration for the simple virtues of these Gauls. Four centuries of the government of pagan Rome had left the Gauls as they were in the days of Julian and Ammianus Marcellinus. A hundred and thirty years of the government of the rejuvenators reduced them to such a plight that the knowledge of it moved the compassionate hearts of some Irish monks to attempt by missionary labours the

[1] Fustel de Coulanges, p. 278.
[2] Mullinger, *Schools of Charles the Great*, p. 17.
[3] Professor Stokes, *Ireland and the Celtic Church*, p. 136.

restoration of faith and morals. France had become practically a heathen land. About A.D. 585, St. Columban, being then between forty and fifty years of age, started for France on his mission of charity with twelve companions. The little party of monks belonged to the monastery of Bangor, on Belfast Lough; this monastery was famous for its learning, and most certainly what light it had was dazzling brilliancy when compared with the darkness of the rejuvenated Empire. St. Columban is said to have understood Greek and Hebrew, and was, as his works testify, no mean Latin writer and poet. No great success attended his labours in France, though he founded the famous monastery of Luxeuil amid the ruins of the deserted Roman town of Luxovium. After a few years of heroic struggle against the infamies around him he was forced to depart, and he sought a similar sphere of action among the Lombards of North Italy; here he founded the great monastery of Bobbio, in which he died. Bobbio, which lasted till 1804, was long a great centre of learning, and the rival of Monte Cassino itself. One of St. Columban's companions was St. Gall, the converter of Switzerland, and the rest were scattered in different parts of the ruined Empire.

Nothing brings home to our minds more distinctly the destruction effected by the barbaric conquest than these facts. Ireland had been admitted into Christendom, and to some measure of culture, only in the fifth century. At that time Gaul and Italy enjoyed to the full all the knowledge of the age: in the next century the old culture-lands had to turn for some little light

and leading to that remote and lately barbarous island!

Dr. Miley, writing from a strongly Catholic standpoint, does but little to soften the evil picture of that time. But he points out the cause. Rome, once the mistress of the world, had fallen under the sway of petty tyrants, such as the Teutonic Counts of Tusculum. It was the same all over the Western world. The Carlovingian Empire had fallen into fragments. 'Most vain it is,' says Dr. Miley, 'to set about counting them by those only, numerous as they are, who have assumed the crown and title of royalty; for in his stronghold and its circuit every count and petty noble who can rally a troop of brigands round him is a king, a perfect autocrat and uncontrolled tyrant, so far as his blood-red arm can reach. . . . The whole face of the West is bristling with their castles; above all they abound in Italy.'[1]

The *rajeunissement nécessaire* was complete in the tenth century. Society in the greater part of Europe was as youthful and vigorous as it had been in the German forests. War and plunder were again the only serious employments of life, at least for the superior classes. Germany had supplied nobles to France, Italy, and Spain; and these men claimed the privileges for which their ancestors had fought under Arminius—the right of private war, immunity from taxation, and freedom from legislative control. These privileges, with that of coining money (valuable in days when debasing the currency was a well-known trick) and the terrible right of private jurisdiction, made every allodial lord a

[1] *History of the Papal States*, vol. ii. p. 252.

petty king. France, says Hallam, was rather 'a collection of States partially allied to each other than a single monarchy.'[1]

Irresponsible power cannot be put into the hands of any, and especially of rude uncultured people, without giving rise to widespread crime. That the tendency was strongly towards evil, and that the Church was quite unable to cope with the disorders of the time, is clearly proved by the miserable condition of the Church herself, and the horrible infamies which afflicted society. It was felt by all who could feel anything that the world had grown so evil that it would soon end, and ought to end. In that dark age men had a practical proof of the truth of Aristotle's aphorism: 'Man disciplined by law and justice is the best, and without them the worst, of animals!'[2]

It is a strange retrospect. The early Christians hoped for the days when all would acknowledge the faith of Christ. In after-times some of the more impatient spirits, disgusted by the coldness of heart of the civilised peoples, longed for the barbarians. Both had their wishes: all became Christians, in name at least, and the barbarians governed the Empire; but the world was worse than ever.

In the early part of the middle ages the Civil law was everywhere the law of the subject populations and of the Church, and it came to be considered in later ages as the law by which all should be judged who could not be proved to be subject to some other rule[3]

[1] *Middle Ages*, vol. i. p. 205. [2] *Politics*, i. 2.
[3] Bryce, p. 32.

This respectful feeling of the clergy for the Roman law, and the knowledge of its principles which they cherished, is a fact of supreme importance in the history of the rebirth of civilisation. When we couple this fact with the uniform teaching and example of the early Church of submission to the imperial laws in all secular matters, alluded to before, we shall find some reason to doubt that the Church of the early middle ages would have unhesitatingly adopted the views of those who rejoiced in the overthrow of the ancient world.

The barbarians introduced into rejuvenated society a new principle of vast importance, or rather, more correctly, they restored an obsolete one ; and this principle is diametrically opposed both to the spirit of Christianity, and to the great result of Roman legislation. 'Of all doctrines,' writes Professor Freeman, 'the most opposed to any kind of Christian teaching is that which sees any exclusive virtue, which acknowledges any exclusive privileges, in particular races or families.' [1] Now this is very precisely what the caste system introduced by the barbarians really did. The caste of nobles considered themselves, and were considered by others, as possessing very exclusive virtues and very exclusive privileges ; and it was equally opposed to the Roman doctrine of equality of all subjects before the law. It was a principle of barbaric jurisprudence, if we may so call it, that men were unequal before the law, while it was the special triumph of Rome that she had slowly and with difficulty struggled to get free of this ancient

[1] *Comparative Politics*, p. 167.

notion, and had in the end established the principle of legal equality.

The sufferings of the lower classes in mediæval times are a hideous subject, but, though scarcely fit to be dwelt on, must be remembered as a fact. Barbarian hatred both of labour and of those who laboured had regained full force. At the end of the eleventh century Ordericus Vitalis describes the revolt of the monks of Molème against the introduction of the old rule of St. Benedict inculcating the duty of labour, and particularly agricultural labour, among the members of the community. A passage from the speech the Chronicler puts into the mouth of the spokesman of the mutineers (who, be it noted, carried their point) is characteristic of the feeling of the age: 'God forbid that the peasants, whose proper lot is daily toil, should abandon themselves to sloth, and with lascivious indolence spend their time in laughter and idle merriment; on the other hand, far be it from illustrious knights, acute philosophers and accomplished scholars, because they have renounced the world, to be bound to occupy themselves in servile and unbeseeming pursuits and occupations, like vile slaves.'[1]

[1] Ordericus Vitalis, vol. iii. p. 44. Ed. Bohn.

## CHAPTER V.

### GENERAL EFFECTS ON SOCIETY OF THE LAWS, AND OF THEIR ADMINISTRATION.

THERE is no influence so powerful in modifying the characteristics of a people as that of the law under which they live, and of the mode of its administration—often its most important part.

In order, then, to form some idea of its real condition as it existed in practice, it is necessary to take a glance at the system of jurisprudence of our ancestors the barbarians. 'The old procedure was sometimes wholly senseless, sometimes only distantly rational.'[1] The court was an assembly of the freemen, who gave judgment in accordance with the customs of the district on proof being made before them. The method of proof consisted in taking the oaths of the litigants and their compurgators. Witnesses, not to be confounded with witnesses in the modern sense, might also be called ; they had to swear to certain facts pointed out by the assembly, Yes or No. They were not further examined. The number of witnesses required to prove each class of fact varied in accordance with the importance of the question, but was fixed for each class.

[1] Maine, *Early Hist. of Institutions*, p. 48.

When the court was puzzled, as no doubt generally happened, recourse was had to ordeal; if this did not prove satisfactory, the final, and by no means the most irrational, method of fighting the matter out, or wager of battle, set the question at rest.

The system was not uniform, as everything was in barbaric confusion; but, as a broad general principle, we may say that every important question touching a man's life or person (for mutilation was an ordinary punishment, such as loss of a hand or foot) had to be decided either by compurgation or by ordeal, with a possible appeal to the wager of battle.

Compurgation was a very simple matter. The litigant brought forward a certain fixed number of men, who swore the same oath as he did. At first these men, called compurgators, should belong to the kin of the litigant whose oath they supported. The formula of the Anglo-Saxon compurgatorial oath was, 'By the Lord, the oath is clean and unperjured which N. has sworn'; the form used in Béarn was short and to the point, 'By the saints he tells the truth'; but in every case it was an absolute affirmation or denial of the point at issue. This involved a gigantic amount of perjury. If a Salian Frank was accused of murder he cleared himself by the oath of twenty-five kinsmen, who swore absolutely to a fact which in the vast majority of cases was quite out of their knowledge. That, at least in later times, the cogency of the proof was supposed to rest in the absolute character of the oaths is shown by the fact that, after the clergy had introduced the habit of swearing to their belief alone, compurgation as an institution fell

rapidly into disuse: the virtue was gone out of it. The number of compurgators required to clear an accused person varied greatly for the same crimes in different countries. Among the Alamanni if a man accused of murder chose his own compurgators, he was obliged to produce eighty. The Welsh were the most magnificent in their ideas on this point: to rebut a charge of murder with more than usual violence, or of poisoning, required the oaths of five hundred kinsmen; the ordinary murderer might clear himself by bringing forward three hundred. It must, however, be remembered that the Welsh compurgator, or *raithman*, did not take an absolute oath; the *raithman* swore, 'that it appears most likely to him that what he swears is true.' They had, however, a class of harder swearers who took an absolute oath, called *nods* men; of these worthies a smaller number was held sufficient. Among the Anglo-Saxons the value of a man's oath was in accordance to his rank; thus, in reckoning up compurgation, the oath of a thane was equivalent to that of six yeomen, being valued in the proportion of their weregilds, or the compositions to be paid for their lives.

All the methods of trial for offences were alternatives for payment of the weregilds, or blood money; and, as this money composition for crimes was adopted in rude societies for the purpose of avoiding the terrible consequences of the blood feud, it may seem that this plan of swearing was in reality adopted to prevent, if possible, the necessity of fighting for the matter in question. Looked at from the standpoint of a primitive jurist, it would be in the highest degree unjust to deprive

any man of the advantage he possessed in being backed by a large and powerful clan, quite capable of carrying him through any legal difficulties. When a powerful criminal was unwilling to pay and ready to fight, the advanced reformer of the time would of course invent some plan of counting heads, and the earnestness of the partisans could be roughly measured by their readiness to commit perjury. As for a little perjury more or less, it seemed a matter of small moment to barbarians, who can be shown from other matters to have had but a very slight regard for veracity.

The barbaric machinery of an ordinary trial before the assembly of the district frequently broke down. This was inevitable from its general uncertainty and the absurdly complicated rules which dictated the forms of oaths and the number of oath-takers, and from the efforts of both parties to cloak baldness of reason with abundance of formalities. In such cases recourse was had to trial by ordeal.

Trial by ordeal, though sufficiently absurd, had then a real basis of principle—the belief in miraculous intervention to shield the innocent and further justice. The same kind of reliance on Providential interposition has often induced pious people to open their Bibles at random and seek guidance from the first text which met their eyes.

The ingenuity of the day invented numerous forms of ordeal ; we may take a glance at the forms pursued in one of these, the ordeal of boiling water. This process was a favourite one in the dark ages. Hinckmar in the ninth century lauded this kind of proof very highly. It

combines, he says, the elements of water and fire: the one representing the Deluge, the judgment inflicted on the wicked of old; the other authorised by the fiery doom of the future, the Day of Judgment; in both of which we see the righteous escape and the wicked suffer.[1]

The trial took place in a church. The spectators were drawn up on each side of the building; one party represented the friends of the accused, the other those of the accuser. All present were to come fasting and in a state of chastity. Between the two parties was a vacant space, and in it stood the caldron over a burning fire. The water having duly boiled to the satisfaction of four arbiters, two chosen by each side, the accused stepped forward. His right hand and arm had been duly swathed with cloth or linen. He had to remove a stone from the bottom of the vessel full of boiling water. The congregation joined in prayer, and then the accused made the trial. If he succeeded in removing the stone his hand and arm remained swathed in the covering for three days, and were then exposed: if the flesh was uninjured, he was innocent; but if there was a trace of burn or scald, he was declared guilty and promptly executed.[2]

Other favourite forms of ordeal were carrying a piece of red-hot iron, walking on hot ploughshares, and so on. The system of trial by ordeal is of pagan origin; and Mr. Lea in his interesting book 'Superstition and Force' has traced its history very fully. In the dark ages,

[1] Lea, *Superstition and Force*, p. 244.

[2] Pike, *History of Crime in England*, vol. i. p. 53.

however, the Church had fully adopted this piece of paganism; it was a source of profit to the clergy, and, as Mr. Lea believes, no doubt correctly, it was also a cause of great demoralisation among them. The Pope had always endeavoured to discourage the practice, and finally Innocent III. in the Fourth Council of the Lateran (1215) forbade the employment of any religious ceremonies at these performances. It was legally suppressed in England in 1219. It lingered on, however, until recent times, shorn of its Christian surroundings, as one of those relics of paganism which give so much employment to students of popular superstitions and folk-lore; and it was in vigorous use in the seventeenth century in witchcraft cases.

Notwithstanding the great authorities that may be cited to prove the certainty of the legal proof afforded by ordeal, there were, as might be expected, many cases in which even the mediæval mind acknowledged that the results were disappointing. A case of this sort is given by Peter Canter in the twelfth century:—Two Englishmen were returning from a pilgrimage in the Holy Land, one of them parted from his companion and proceeded to visit the shrine of Santiago de Compostella, the other returned to England. The friends of the absent man accused the returned traveller of having murdered his companion. There was no evidence forthcoming; but, the accusation being properly sworn to, the supposed criminal would be hanged if he could not rebut the charge. Probably he had no friends willing to come forward as compurgators; at all events he was forced to submit to the ordeal. He failed, and was hanged imme-

diately afterwards. In a few days the missing man came back safe and sound.[1]

Difficulties of this class were explained easily enough: a man, innocent of the particular crime for which he underwent the ordeal, might still fail from being at the time guilty of some unrepented sin. Thus, an innocent man was convicted of horse-stealing. Fortunately for him time was granted to him before execution to consult some monks: they were satisfied of his innocence, but pointed out to him that, though he was not guilty of stealing horses, yet he had committed a grievous sin by shaving his beard like an ecclesiastic, he being a lay person. The culprit got another chance by great good luck; in the interim he repented his sin and let his beard grow—the second ordeal was a triumphant success![2]

It was also acknowledged that the guilty sometimes passed through the ordeal successfully. Lambert of Redensberg was notoriously concerned in the horribly sacrilegious and brutal murder of Charles the Good, of Flanders. He was permitted to clear himself by the ordeal of hot iron, and to the astonishment of everyone was proved innocent. Shortly afterwards he was killed while conducting the siege of Oostburg. A pious chronicler explains the difficulty according to the ideas of the eleventh century. Lambert, notwithstanding his guilt, escaped the ordeal because of his humility and repentance; and he adds a philosophical commentary: 'Thus it is that in battle the unjust man is killed, although in the ordeal of fire or water he may escape if truly repentant.'[3]

[1] Lea, p. 349. [2] *Ibid.* p. 351. [3] *Ibid.* p. 356.

No doubt the high position and wealth of Lambert assisted his humility and repentance in enabling him to carry his piece of red-hot iron. There is, I fear, room to doubt whether innocence, humility, repentance, and all the virtues, with an empty purse, ever enabled their unfortunate possessor to pass with safety through the iniquitous absurdity of the ordeal.

Such were the methods of legal proof known to our Anglo-Saxon forefathers; they were retained, as we have just seen, in Norman times, and indeed for long afterwards. The Normans, however, introduced some change into legal practice, by bringing the wager of battle into a more prominent position. To fight the matter out with sword or spear, hatchet or club, had long been a favourite mode of settling legal questions with the Teutons, and to none was it more congenial than to the Normans.

A curious extension of the duel was the right to challenge the judge to mortal combat. In continental countries, if a man felt aggrieved by the decision of the judges, he appealed to arms, and some member of the court had to meet him in the lists. As the judicial combat was in this case of the nature of an appeal, and as no appeal lay from the King's Court, the royal judges were safe from this highly inconvenient practice. For this reason, if the importance of the case or the position of the litigants made an appeal probable, the inferiors were glad to have one of the King's Court to sit with them and to share in the responsibility of passing sentence. But the judges of the inferior courts sitting alone were always liable to be called on to uphold their

opinion with sword and lance, and the reversal of judgment in the battle appeal involved very serious consequences to the defeated judges. Beaumanoir says that in civil cases the overthrow of the judge involved loss of office and a heavy fine, while in criminal cases the mistaken official suffered death and confiscation of goods. Under such conditions we may feel sure that when the suitor before a seigniorial judge was some minor imitator of Robert de Belesme, a wise official would be of Dogberry's opinion, 'Of such kind of men the less you meddle or make with them the more is for your honesty,' and would dismiss the case if possible. This incident of the judicial office led in Germany to the provision that the judges of the lower courts should be active men and vigorous of body ;[1] so all the continental seigniorial courts were presided over by warriors prepared to do battle.

In England the habit of fighting the judge was never established, though Glanville, towards the end of the twelfth century, was afflicted with doubts on the subject, and enters into speculations, doubtless most interesting to the judicial mind at the time, as to whether, in case of challenge, the judge would be permitted to appoint a champion or have to fight in person, and also what would be the consequences of defeat to the judge.

The practice in England was to challenge the witnesses, a form of procedure in use also abroad. The English introduced an improvement in this: abroad you were only permitted to challenge a witness on the other side, but in England you might challenge your

[1] Lea, p. 114.

own witness to mortal combat. This was useful in many cases, in consequence of an ingenious legal artifice. If a gentleman, for instance, was found in possession of stolen property—no unusual position in those days—he might allege that he had received it from another person, and summon him as a 'warrantor.' This unfortunate then found himself in a very awkward dilemma. If he acknowledged the transaction, he almost confessed a theft, and if he denied it, the defendant who summoned him might oblige him to fight. The usual course in France was to accuse the principal witness for the prosecution of some crime which incapacitated him from giving evidence until he had cleared himself by combat either by champion or in person. This also afforded a ready means of escaping from legal condemnation. So completely was the liability of the witness to be called on to fight established in men's minds that some of the codes order that witnesses are to come into court armed, and to have their weapons blessed on the altar before giving their testimony.[1]

With such a legal system there was no protection for the weak or unfriended. Mr. Pike sums up the position in England before the Conquest: 'There were practically no courts and no jurisdictions for the decision of matters of fact; the accuser and his party came before a certain assembly; if the accused had a party sufficiently strong, he also appeared, and was saved by his friends.'[2] If he could not, he was either hanged, or joined the large body of outlaws with which the country was filled. Matters were slow to improve after the Conquest in

[1] Lea, p. 111. [2] *History of Crime in England*, vol. i. p. 89.

England, and were certainly not better on the Continent, except within the limits of the Byzantine Empire, where the Roman law was still supreme. It is necessary to except the Eastern Empire, for during the two centuries (867–1057) in which the Basilian Dynasty held sway, a period corresponding to the worst phase of Western barbarism, there was a rule of reason in the East. A great authority tells us: 'Respect for the administration of justice pervaded society more generally than it had ever done at any preceding period of the history of the world—a fact which the greatest historians have overlooked, though it is all-important in the history of human civilisation.' [1]

The moral effects of such a condition of law as obtained in the rejuvenated portion of Europe were deplorable. The 'wager of law,' as compurgation was called, accustomed men to habitual and almost inevitable perjury. For protection men were obliged to join some of the numerous guilds or brotherhoods. To pay the weregilds for one another was one of the duties of the guild-brothers, and, as Mr. Pike says, they could hardly avoid joining in the alternative compurgatorial oath. Taking the oath would both save their pockets and be a neighbourly action, according to the notion of the times. On the close connection between guilds and compurgation Mr. Lea holds the views of Mr. Pike; and the circumstance is mentioned by Mr. Lea that associations for this very purpose of taking the compurgatorial oath existed in Denmark in the seventeenth century. Unfortunately, common-sense had not suffi-

[1] Finlay, *Hist. of Greece*, vol. ii. p. 10.

cient force in that country to cause the abolition of this iniquitous system till towards the close of that century. It is a horrible thing to think that a system of so-called law could be permitted to exist which obliged men to enter into agreements to commit perjury in self-defence.

The weak, the unfriended, or the poor could hope for no protection from a legal system like this. To what agency or power could they appeal?[1]

The Church, the guardian of the traditions of Roman polity and Roman letters, herself a defaced relic of the civilised world of the past, at one time seemed the only hope; and she made an effort to restore some sort of order. In some respects the time was favourable for the assertion of spiritual power. Any little knowledge or sense remaining in the world was to be found among the clergy or those immediately under their influence. Outside were rapine and violence, but also unquestioning belief and abject superstition. No man dared to question the power of the Church.

Years of pestilence and famine, the result of wanton destruction of the means of subsistence, caused by the

[1] It is worth while to note that the last time in which the ghost of the old iniquity of compurgation horrified an English law court was so late as 1824. In the case of King v. Williams (reported in 2 *Barnwell & Creswell*, p. 528) the defendant Williams, under the advice of some black-letter lawyer, appeared in court at the head of eleven compurgators, prepared to swear. Law was law, and the judges were helpless. To prevent this outrage on common-sense and public morality being brought to its end, the plaintiff abandoned his rights and threw up his case in disgust. Mr. Lea expressed some doubt as to whether the wager of battle had been abolished in his own country, South Carolina, when he wrote in 1878 (*Lea*, p. 80).

constant wars of the feudal nobles, had driven the people of France to the verge of despair. At length the clergy of Aquitaine, about the year 1032, proclaimed a general peace; this spread over all France, and took the form of the *Treuga Dei*, or the 'Peace of God.' All private wars were to cease from the noon of Wednesday in each week till the noon of the following Monday, in honour of the institution of the Eucharist and the Passion and Resurrection of Christ. Clergy, pilgrims, travellers, merchants, farmers and their oxen of the plough, ladies with their attendants, all women, and the property of monks, clergy, and millers, were to enjoy perpetual safety, and the violation of any of these provisions was visited with the most terrible penalties the Church could inflict.

It was a bold assumption of regal power, and only to be excused on the ground that there was no regal power in France. King Henry I. had enough to do to protect his city of Paris and the narrow territory which acknowledged his sway, and even within these narrow bounds it was hard work to keep the nobles in some semblance of obedience. Where there was a shadow of royal authority the Truce of God was not preached. It scarcely affected Germany, and was not received in Italy, as the priesthood seemed unwilling to assume such unusual functions where the royal authority appeared capable of preserving some degree of order.[1]

The movement was received with enthusiasm in France. The warriors swore to respect the honour of women, and to protect the useful and holy classes of

[1] Giesebrecht, *Geschichte der deutschen Kaiserzeit*, vol. ii. p. 374.

society from the customary pillaging. They swore, and they broke their vows. As Dean Milman wrote: 'In such an age it could be but a truce, a brief temporary uncertain truce.'[1] Herr Giesebrecht, indeed, speaks of it as if he thought it was more effectual, but the compensation it gave for the absence of royal power was necessarily very imperfect. In one way it may have left a more permanent trace on society: in a new form it is said to have given rise to the institution of knighthood.[2] Herr Giesebrecht traces the origin of the semi-sacerdotal character which blends so strangely with the soldier in the ideal of the mediæval knight to the influence of the Church at this time on the minds of those who became the champions of the Truce of God. Chivalry, then, would owe its origin to France in the eleventh century. The point, however, is a contested one, and, as commonly enough occurs, it is not worth contesting. Chivalry was a splendid ideal, but, like many other splendid ideals, was a thing to be talked about and to supply a theme for verse and prose, but to be very thoroughly ignored in every-day life. Professor Freeman seems to acknowledge the French origin of 'the follies and fripperies of the reign of knights and ladies.'

In trying to reorganise society, the Church had very plainly undertaken a task beyond her strength. The Kingdom of God is within. Religion has no power over those whom it is above all things necessary to control. What did monsters like Robert de Belesme, Earl of Shrewsbury and lord of wide domains in Nor-

[1] *Latin Christianity*, vol. iv. p. 207. [2] *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

mandy, care for the thunders of the Church? Would he forego the pleasure of witnessing the tortures of his wretched victims, or of tearing out the eyes of little children, as he is said to have done, at the bidding of a few base-born priests sitting in a synod? Within a century after the proclamation of the Truce of God, Ordericus Vitalis describes the conduct of Geoffrey Plantagenet and his Angevins: 'Exhibiting no reverence for sacred things, they even impiously trod under foot the sanctuary of the Lord, and, as if they were heathens, insulted the priests and ministers of God. Some of them they irreverently stripped of their vestments before the holy altars, and others they slew while they were ringing the bells and invoking God.'[1] It must be remembered that this was an age of faith: no one ventured to doubt; there was scarcely sufficient intelligence left in the world to express a doubt. In theory the Church was supreme. The 'fresh young souls' the clerics had longed for had come and had conquered, and this was the 'marvellous fruit' the Church was now to garner. The only effectual aid in restoring what society wanted, the lost curb of the law, was the kingly power, and this aid was effectual whenever and wherever it came. Alfred's power in Saxon England was felt to be good, 'for in that whole kingdom the poor had no helpers, or few, save the King himself.'[2] To re-establish that power the Church was constrained to lend a helping hand, although she, or a portion of her members, had no doubt formerly aided

[1] Vol. iv. p. 168.

[2] Asser, quoted in Green's *Conquest of England*, p. 141.

in the destruction of the same authority in the Roman Empire.

Under mediæval conditions there could no longer be a question about that last-born doctrine in the Roman world, that the Emperor was subject to the law. There was no law, and a stern tyrant like Henry I. of England was the ruler the times called for—a tyrant who would permit no tyranny save his own. In good time constitutionalism was to grow up with the re-birth of the principle of the supremacy of the law; but for the present absolutism was the only intelligible doctrine.

There is something almost grotesque in the notion that the barbaric principle of the unlimited licence of a caste can be the origin of the modern liberty of a people. It may, and undoubtedly did, lead to such a state of things as existed in Germany till recently; but to believe that ordered freedom like that of England could have had such an origin is in the last degree absurd. That the growth of popular power (says Mr. Herbert Spencer [1]) is in all ways associated with trading activities is a truth which cannot be too much insisted upon, and their existence depends on social security, which implies obedience to law. Now the Teutonic, or barbarous, aristocratic principle rejected obedience to law, and the nobles directly endeavoured to depress and discourage the trading classes.

Mediæval history everywhere tells the same tale: the strong hand of the Crown represses the licence of the barbaric nobles, and trade springs into life. In Germany, at the very beginning of the twelfth century

[1] *Political Institutions*, p. 421.

when the Emperor Henry IV., during an interval in his disputes with the Papacy, gained some real power and used it to proclaim and enforce peace, the effect was magical :—

'Throughout the Empire the princes had for thirty restless years enjoyed the proud privilege of waging war against their neighbours, of maintaining their armed followers by the plunder of their enemies or of the peaceful commercial traveller. This source of wealth, of power, of busy occupation, was cut off. They could no longer sally from their impregnable castles and bring home the rich and easy booty. While the low-born vulgar were rising into opulence or independence, they were degraded to distress and ruin and famine. Their barns and cellars were no longer stocked with the plundered produce of the neighbouring fields or vineyards ; they were obliged to dismiss or starve their once gallant and numerous retinues. He who was accustomed to ride abroad on a foaming courser was reduced to a sorry nag ; he who disdained to wear any robes which were not dyed in purple must now appear in coarse attire, of the same dull colour which it had by nature.' [1]

Meanwhile the roads and rivers were alive with commerce. The base burghers were growing rich ; and, if this state of things had continued, no doubt the growth of a powerful middle class would have led to ordered liberty, here as elsewhere.

Thus to the question, 'What do we really owe to the barbarians?' as has been seen, very different answers

[1] Milman, *Latin Christianity*, vol. iv. p. 227.

have been given. The admirers of the Teutonic race tell us in effect, 'Everything'; M. Littré and his school answer with equal confidence, 'Practically nothing.' In their opinion the sole services the barbarians rendered—the establishment of our modern States and the destruction of the imperial power—would have come about naturally without their aid, and in a way in every respect preferable.

## ESSAY III.

# THE GAULS

### BEFORE AND AFTER THE ROMAN INVASION.

## THE GAULS.

BEFORE attempting to consider the alleged corruption of Transalpine Gaul under Roman influences, it is necessary to take a glance at the social condition of that country previous to its conquest by Cæsar. Of this condition our historians give us an interesting, if incomplete, picture.

To form a correct conception of the Gallic nations we must take into account the nature of the country they inhabited; and no country is more adapted to be the home of a great nation than France. To enable a nation to become great it is clear enough that the country it inhabits should be of sufficient extent, possess fertility and mineral wealth, and above all should have ample facilities for internal and external commerce. Facilities for external intercourse are especially important in determining at what date any given country is likely to become civilised. Greece, of all European lands, was most favoured in this respect, by its proximity to the ancient seats of Eastern civilisation, by the numerous harbours and inlets which form its coast, and by the chain of islands which, as it were, connect it with Asia.

Greece was the first European country to become civilised, and the Grecians the first group of Aryan tribes to attain to culture. Next in advantages of position, and next in time in the order of civilisation, comes Italy, with its long peninsula jutting far into the middle sea, which it and its outlying island of Sicily nearly divide into two great lakes. Still further away, and therefore later to receive civilisation, was Gaul ; but in all other respects its advantages were incomparably superior.

The great northern European plain widens out in Gaul till it extends without practical interruption from the North Sea to the Mediterranean, and ends to the west in the Atlantic Ocean. This ample and for the most part fertile surface is traversed by fine rivers, that have been used for traffic from very early times. 'The courses of these rivers are so happily disposed in relation to each other that you may traffic from one sea to the other, carrying the merchandise only a small distance, and that easily, across the plains. This on reflection will prove to be one main cause of the excellence of this country, since the inhabitants are enabled mutually to communicate, and to procure from each other the necessaries of life ; this is peculiarly the case at the present time, when, on account of their leisure from war, they are devoting themselves to agriculture and the pursuits of social life.'[1] Such are some of the remarks made by Strabo, a writer who died about A.D. 25, on the advantages Gaul enjoyed for the development of internal trade. The modern tone of his observations is creditable

[1] Strabo, lib. iv. c. i. 2.

to the clear-headed Greek, and perhaps also to his instructors in the venerable commercial city of Tyre, where he tells us he studied philosophy. His practical view of the advantages of peace and social intercourse is in strong contrast to the sorry stuff later Roman writers, such as Pliny, Tacitus and Seneca, indulge in when they discourse about the virtues of primitive man and the evils of wealth.

In addition to an ample territory, a fine climate, fertility of soil, and facilities for intercourse, Gaul also possessed mineral wealth in a form which conferred great importance on the country in early times. The ancients believed that Gaul was rich in gold mines. That gold was and is to be found there is certain. Mommsen appears to think that the supply was not more abundant in ancient than in modern times, and that washings now unprofitable were remunerative in remote ages from the employment of slave labour.[1] This may be true, but we must not forget that deposits of gold in rivers, arising from the disintegration of auriferous rocks, are of extremely slow formation and more easily worked out than veins in the solid rock. There is no reason to think that the auriferous sand of the Rhône was not in early times richer than at present, now that the accumulations of previous thousands of years have been exhausted, and before sufficient time has elapsed for new ones to be formed. Another metal, of prime importance in the old world, tin, was also found in different parts of Gaul. The ancient working of stream tin in the Morbihan appears to have had im-

[1] *History of Rome*, vol. iv. p. 221.

portant consequences.[1] Iron was also worked very early.

With such resources Gaul was pretty certain to attract the attention of the more civilised nations of antiquity at an early date. The two great civilised, or commercial (for the words are so closely related as to be almost synonymous), powers of ancient times were the Phœnicians and the Greeks. The first, that mighty nation to which we owe so much and of which we know so little, drove her trade northwards from the Straits of Gibraltar to Britain for tin, and perhaps to the Baltic for amber, long before the authentic history of Greece begins. Gades, now Cadiz, was founded by the Phœnicians about B.C. 1100, as an entrepôt for their ocean traffic. A wonderful people—the English, as they have been called, of those remote times—by circumspection, by skill, by tough endurance, and brave ventures, they succeeded in extending their dominion in ever widening circles, and making the sea the instrument of their wealth and the bearer of their power.[2] These traders jealously guarded the secrets of their commerce, and succeeded but too well in doing so: their intercourse with Britain is but an inference, the position of the Cassiterides a subject of dispute. But the inference that they did trade to Britain at an early date seems legitimate; and their coasting trade along the Atlantic seaboard of Gaul explains a remarkable fact. When Cæsar conquered the hitherto independent portion of Gaul he found a tribe, the Veneti, in the possession of

[1] Professor Rhys, *Celtic Britain*, p. 48.

[2] Duncker, *History of Antiquity*, vol. ii. p. 49. Abbot's transl.

a singular skill in ship-building. These Veneti occupied the district of the Morbihan, to the principal town of which, Vannes, they have left their name. The coast of the Morbihan is a difficult and dangerous portion of the seaboard of Brittany, but it affords good shelter to those who are locally acquainted with it, and is well circumstanced for trade, being close to the mouth of the Loire. The territory of the Veneti also yielded tin, one of the chief matters of Phœnician trade. Altogether no place would be more likely to be pitched upon by people carrying on a coasting trade, to establish stations for lading and refitting ships and obtaining pilots, than the Morbihan.

Cæsar was much struck by the ships of the Veneti, and gives a long description of them. They were large vessels built of oak, having flatter floors than the Roman ships, to enable them to take the ground easily in tidal harbours. They were of great strength and bolted with iron,[1] built high in bow and stern—a form very useful in the high waves of the Atlantic and Bay of Biscay. These vessels were able to work under sails alone; indeed oars would be of little use in such large vessels in broken water. Cæsar states that the sails were made of leather. Perhaps the most remarkable fact about

[1] In Mr. Rhys' admirable little book, *Celtic Britain*, I find it stated that the decks of these ships were one foot thick: 'They (the ships) were made of solid oak with decks a foot thick.' Cæsar's words are certainly 'transtra ex pedalibus in latitudinem trabibus,' but the *transtra* must surely be the deck beams, not the deck planks; oak decks a foot thick would be completely absurd. But deck beams a Roman foot in depth, or moulded, as ship carpenters say, would be about the scantling allowed for the upper deck beams of a small frigate in the days of wooden walls. (*De Bel. Gal.* iii. 13.)

these ships is the anticipation by at least two thousand years of what is generally considered a capital and very recent improvement in practical seamanship: the employment of chain instead of hemp cables. Professor Rhys considers that the Veneti learnt the art of constructing such vessels from the Carthaginians or Phœnicians; and no other supposition is probable, as the idea that a rude Gallic tribe in a remote part of Brittany could make such an advance in difficult arts, unaided by more highly civilised people, is almost absurd.

The influence of the Greeks on ancient Gaul is, however, no matter of mere inference or conjecture; it is an historic fact. About B.C. 600 a colony of Phocæan Greeks founded Massalia, which afterwards became the rival of Carthage. At the time when Marseilles was established Rome was but a petty tribal town, which doubtful history represents as under the rule of Ancus Marcius, fourth of the line of shadowy kings. Marseilles still remains a prosperous place; while the Eternal City, but for its great historic memories, would be nothing better than a most interesting museum of antiquities—so great is the power of a well-chosen position for trade! Enterprising as were the Greeks, they confined their maritime trade to the Mediterranean; it was the Phœnicians and Carthaginians who carried on the ocean trading of those early days. The Massalian Greeks, however, desired if possible to open up an overland trade with the Northern regions, which yielded so much profit to their Phœnician rivals. For the purpose apparently of discovering the sources from which were drawn the supplies of amber and tin, the Massa-

lians sent a Greek geographer and mathematician, Pytheas, to explore those practically unknown regions of the North. The date of his voyage or voyages appears to have been about B.C. 330. The traveller landed in Kent, sailed into the Baltic, and coasted along Norway to the Arctic circle, crossed the North Sea to the British Islands, and coasted from the Shetlands to the Straits of Dover. The history of his travels is unfortunately lost, but Mr. Elton has recently collected in his 'Origins of English History' the fragments preserved as quotations by other writers. The principal interest of these travels of Pytheas for our present purpose lies in the fact that they very probably opened the way for that very extensive overland trade indicated by Strabo, and which certainly came into existence very shortly after the date assigned to Pytheas. In spreading its commerce Massalia necessarily spread its culture to some extent. Cæsar[1] tells us that the Gallic Druids had learnt to make use of the Greek alphabet; and Strabo says that 'this city for some little time back has become a school for the barbarians, and has communicated to the Galatae such a taste for Greek literature that they even draw contracts on the Grecian model.'[2]

Finally the Romans came into Gaul, where Caius Sextius founded the first Roman city, Aquae Sextiae, now Aix, B.C. 122.

Such was the country and such were the foreign influences to which its inhabitants were subjected. We may now inquire what was the social condition to which the Gauls, under such influences, had attained before the

[1] *De Bel. Gal.* vi. 14. [2] Strabo, lib. iv. c. i. 5.

coming of Cæsar. In entering on this inquiry we must if possible avoid the besetting sin in these matters of fancying that uniformity exists among the inhabitants of a country. Such uniformity is very rare where the area is extensive. When it exists at all, it is the result of the constant intercourse of a highly advanced civilisation, and is therefore quite impossible in the early periods of history. Along the seaboard traversed by the coasting vessels of foreign nations, and on and near to the tracks of the mercantile caravans, determined by rivers and roads, the condition of the people must have been far higher than in remote places. It is very easy to speak of '*the* Gaul,' but there were Gauls and Gauls. The rude Belgae, lying far from civilising influences, were not the least like the half Greek, half Roman inhabitants of what became Gallia Narbonensis; these differed from the Aquitani, and the Aquitani again from such tribes as the Veneti. Bearing this small matter of common-sense steadily in mind, we may make use of Mommsen's view of what he calls the civilisation of the Transalpine Celts; he has collected and brought together a number of facts in a few pages.[1]

The Gauls had made some advance in agriculture; the Romans learnt from them, or from some of them, the use of marl as manure. Mommsen remarks that in Britain threshing was not yet usual. Corn was probably prepared in some places, even in Gaul proper, by the ancient method of cutting off the ears and drying them by fire. This method was employed in Ireland

[1] *History of Rome*, vol. iv. pp. 217 *et seq.*

in the eighteenth century, and was the subject of Acts of Parliament, as well as 'tail ploughing.'

> The Western Isle renowned for bogs,
> For Tories and for great wolf-dogs,
> For drawing hobbies by the tails,
> And threshing corn with fiery flails.[1]

This 'fiery flail' continued far down into the last century to be employed in the western islands of Scotland.[2] The simple art of threshing, observed by Pytheas to be practised in covered barns by the inhabitants of Kent, thus took upwards of two thousand years to reach the remote islands of the West. Agriculture had not displaced pastoral husbandry everywhere in Gaul. In Cæsar's time Brittany was poor in corn; while among the Belgae the simple industry of feeding hogs on acorns, produced by the dense oak forests which covered so much of their territory, furnished the principal means of life.

The next point Mommsen takes up is urban life in ancient Gaul. Always anxious to emphasise differences of race (with a view to the establishment of the grand contrast between 'the German' and 'the Celt'), Mommsen begins by telling us that 'the Gauls were from the first disposed to settle in groups; there were open villages everywhere.' What is the meaning of 'from the first'? It can only mean from the earliest time at which we have any authentic knowledge of Gaul; but we have no such knowledge of the Gauls until they had made some advances in civilisation, due to some centuries of intercourse with peoples at a higher

[1] Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, vol. i. p. 39. [2] Rhys, *Celtic Britain*, p. 8.

level of culture. Again, the disposition to live in groups in reality belongs to all humanity above a condition of extreme and unusual savagery. Here and there, scattered over the world, there are savages who live in isolated family groups, but everywhere else there are at least tribes; and tribal villages are to be found wherever nomadic life has been abandoned. Cæsar's account of the Germans shows that, even in inaccessible and therefore uncivilised Germany, nomadic life was almost at an end; necessarily then it had long ceased in the more accessible Gaul, and settled life and villages had succeeded to mere roving tribes.

In some districts, more civilised than others, the villages had grown into towns of some size. Now and again Cæsar found a town which merited the Homeric epithet *εὐτείχεος*, such as Avaricum, the capital of the Bituriges—'pulcherrima prope totius Galliae urbs,'[1] as Cæsar calls it, whose walls deserved the full description he gives of them.[2] But these 'well-walled' places did not exist in the north of Gaul, where the people, as Mommsen tells us,[3] sought protection in the morasses and forests rather than in the towns; and such a state of civilisation as large and fortified towns indicate would of course be vainly sought for among the hog-feeders of the north-east. Speaking generally of Gaul, town life was not highly developed, and the people as a rule preferred living among their fields. Notwithstanding his remarks about the disposition of the Celts to settle in groups, Mommsen is quite conscious of the disinclination—or rather, as he seems to put it, 'incapa-

[1] *De Bel. Gal.* vii. c. 15. [2] *Ibid.* c. 32. [3] *History*, iv. p. 218.

city'—of this race to form cities; for a few pages further on there is an important passage:[1] 'The political development of the Celtic nation also presents very remarkable phenomena. The constitution of the State was based here as everywhere on the clan-canton, with its prince, its council of the elders, and its freemen capable of bearing arms; but the peculiarity in this case was that it never got beyond this cantonal constitution. Among the Greeks and Romans the canton was very early superseded by the ringwall as the basis of political unity: where two cantons met within the same walls, they amalgamated into one commonwealth; where a body of burgesses assigned to a portion of their fellow-burgesses a new ringwall, there regularly arose in this way a new State, connected with the mother-community only by the ties of piety, or at most of clientship. Among the Celts, on the other hand, the burgess body continued at all times to be the clan; prince and council presided over the canton and not over any town, and the general Diet of the canton formed the authority of last resort in the state. The town had, as in the East, merely mercantile and strategic, not political importance; for which reason the Gallic townships, even when walled and very considerable, such as Vienne and Geneva, were in the view of the Greeks and Romans merely villages.' I fancy that the peculiarity in this case admits of a very simple explanation: that when the Roman conquest of Gaul made an end of so-called Celtic civilisation, the Celts were not advanced enough to possess towns of real importance and power. It may,

[1] Vol. iv. p. 222.

of course, be maintained that Celts would never have reached this stage of civilisation ; but this is mere assertion, void of proof.

To sum up these statements as to urban life in Gaul. The Gauls were no longer nomads: settled life was universal ; therefore villages were formed everywhere. Considerable towns existed in the more civilised districts. The town as a political centre was unknown ; the town was merely a mart and a fortress. Finally, as a rule the Gauls disliked towns, and preferred a life in the country.

Mommsen next considers the means of intercourse in Gaul. 'Everywhere,' he says, 'there were roads and bridges, and the river navigation was considerable and lucrative.' Of course 'everywhere' cannot refer to very backward places where there was no trade ; for instance, among the hog-feeders of the Silva Ardenna. Our authority next takes up the subject of the maritime navigation of the Celts. Here he describes two very different conditions ; in the Channel the Gauls in Cæsar's time and long afterwards employed a kind of portable leathern skiff, a coracle in fact ; while the Veneti built strong and serviceable sailing ships. Here as elsewhere we see the heterogeneity of ancient nations, and are warned against the error of considering the tribes of which these were composed as being all on the same level of civilisation. Nor does Mommsen allude to the high probability, to put it at the lowest, that the skill of the Veneti was due to Carthaginian or Phœnician influences.

We are told that handicrafts, particularly metal working, were at a fairly high level. Iron and copper

and gold were worked with some skill, and there was a rude coinage in some places, the coins being rough imitations of Greek models.

The arts of design were at a very low level. To decorate arms and to make ornaments of a barbaric kind was all that was attempted. In literature there was a greater advance; poetry was cultivated, bards were honoured, and 'Hellenic humanism met with a ready reception wherever and in whatever shape it approached them.'

The next thing to consider is their political organisation. When Cæsar conquered the country Gaul was divided into eighty independent Cantons of very unequal size and under different forms of government; some were despotisms, some limited monarchies chiefly elective, and some were aristocratic republics. All, however, according to Cæsar, had one common characteristic: the people were of no account, little better than slaves; the nobles and Druids alone were of political importance. The land was for the most part in the possession of the nobles, and was secured in their hands by some sort of law of entail, as we might say. There were very few small or peasant proprietors; there were vast numbers of slaves, and Cæsar notes the troops of abject poor, *egentes et perditi*, to be seen everywhere. The power of the Druidical priesthood, once supreme, was declining, though the Druids still enjoyed great privileges. Each prince and noble surrounded himself with retainers called *ambacti*, which Cæsar translates as *clientes*. These formed bands of mounted warriors, devoted to the service of the chief by the strongest personal obliga-

tions. This institution is obviously the same as that observed among the Germans by Tacitus, and to which he gave the name of *comitatus*. The *ambacti* of the Gauls were very much the same as the *ambus* or *amhus* of the ancient Irish, or the *clientes* of ancient Rome, a similarity shown by Cæsar's employment of the words *ambacti* and *clientes* as synonymous. Mommsen tries to make this Celtic institution of 'Knighthood,' as he calls it, something characteristic of the race. But there is no institution more widespread; it appears in every society under the rule of a warlike caste.[1] It is somewhat ludicrous to see Mommsen persuading himself that he finds in chivalry a characteristic weakness of the Celtic mind, while the equally convinced race-theorist, M. Sepet, attributes this same chivalry to the inherent virtues of the Teutons and their great institution, the *comitatus*. To any one who considers the matter without theory, merely regarding facts, it is perfectly clear that when a society is organised on the basis of rule by a military caste, the personal tie binding free warriors to their chiefs is a natural phenomenon. It was so in primitive Greece and Rome, and among the ancient Gauls, Teutons, and Irish; and it again prevailed in the middle ages, when the re-introduction of barbarism had reduced society to a primitive level. In every case where such a rule exists, there are such institutions; *Gesithas*, *ambacti*, ἑταῖροι, &c., differ little from one another: the form is modified to suit time and place, but they are ever in essentials the same.[2]

[1] Freeman, *Norman Conquest*, vol. i. p. 87.

[2] 'La chevalerie, qu'est-ce autre chose, je le demande, que le vasselage anobli par le dévouement, et la suzeraineté consacrée par la protection et

There was no tie of national union between the eighty cantons into which Gaul was divided. Differing from one another in degrees of civilisation, they also differed to a great extent in race, language, and laws. 'The Aquitani differ from the Galatic race, both as to form of body and language.'[1] And Cæsar tells us that the Aquitani, Celtae, and Belgae differed from one another in language and laws. There was no national council to give unity to this heterogeneous body. The sole link was the common religion, and that was a foreign faith and in decay. The Druids formed a strongly organised corporation under a chief Druid or high priest. They had been all-powerful, but in some unexplained way their power had been much weakened before Cæsar's invasion. M. de Coulanges, from whom mainly I have taken these facts about the political condition of Gaul, does not speculate as to the causes of this decline. It seems however to be likely enough that the power of this priesthood gradually fell, as knowledge spread among the laity from Græco-Latin influences.

The account of Druidism given by Cæsar[2] rather conveys the idea of a priesthood, holding some esoteric doctrines, surrounded by and exercising great influence on an ignorant laity, who were held in subjection by reverence for the learning and by fear of the miraculous powers the priests were supposed to possess He tells us that the Druids sometimes spent twenty

la tutelle ; dévouement d'une part, protection et tutelle de l'autre : ce sont là précisément les principes du compagnonnage' (*Revue des Questions Hist.* vol. vi. p. 247).

[1] Strabo, iv. c. 2, 1.

[2] *De Bel. Gal.* vi. cc. 13, 14.

years in learning the sacred verses, which were not written, but taught orally; either through fear that the secrets would become known to the people, or that the memories of the pupils might be weakened by trusting too much to the aid of writing. Both the reputation and the fear of the clergy would depend much on lay ignorance, and the spread of Greek humanities and philosophy would be fatal to them. Cæsar also tells us that this religion was considered as somewhat foreign, the belief being that it had been imported from Britain, to which country Druids wishing to become perfect in the studies were in the habit of going. A scepticism as to the knowledge and power of the Druids rapidly increasing from foreign intercourse, together with the feeling that Druidism was not national, may explain the extraordinary rapidity of the decline of this religion. Cæsar found Druidism a great power, though a failing one; forty years after Cæsar's time it was powerless in Gaul. If Druidism had been in truth a national creed, and an outcome of the Celtic mind, as Mommsen would have us believe, such a history as this is inexplicable.

In spite of efforts on the part of the Druids from time to time to maintain peace, the cantons were engaged in nearly constant wars with one another. So great were these tribal jealousies that Cæsar was never without Gallic allies.[1] The Druids were of course against him, for the introduction of Roman law and polity was fatal to their influence; so were the great chiefs who ruled or hoped to rule; but the towns were

[1] Fustel de Coulanges, p. 26.

in his favour, and he received assistance from many of the knights, who were no doubt well pleased to escape from the tyranny of their over-lords.

The account our authorities give us of the state of Gallic civilisation enables us to form some idea of the social condition of the more advanced tribes in Gaul at the coming of Cæsar. The stage of development reached is obviously that in which the clan system of more primitive times had passed into the rule of a conquering and governing caste. The features of this type of organisation are everywhere the same. In ancient Greece, as represented by Homer and Hesiod, Mr. Mahaffy tells us, we are introduced to 'a very exclusive caste society, in which the key to the comprehension of all the details depends upon one leading principle—that consideration is due to the members of the caste and even to its dependents, but that beyond its pale even the most deserving are of no account save as objects of plunder.'[1] Hesiod wrote the most ancient fable that has come down to us in the Greek language —'The Hawk and the Nightingale'—to figure the hatred and contempt of the ruling caste for the peasant. The following is Elton's translation, which is sufficiently near the original. It occurs in the 'Works and Days':

> A stooping hawk with crooked talon smote
> The nightingale of variegated note,
> And snatch'd among the clouds. Beneath the stroke
> This piteous shriek'd, and that imperious spoke.
> Wretch! vain are cries; a stronger holds thee now
> Where'er I shape my course a captive thou,

[1] *Social Life in Greece*, p. 44. 2nd ed.

Maugre thy song, must company my way,
I rend my banquet or I loose my prey ;
Senseless is he that dares with power contend,
Defeat, rebuke, despair shall be his end.

Mr. Mahaffy's key enables us to comprehend the details of Gallic society, as well as those of Greek society, while under the rule of an irresponsible caste. The troops of *egentes et perditi*: the flocks of wretched debtors, the people of no account, little better than slaves, which Cæsar tells of, all these are features of the same type of society. Under a similar rule the same order of things was to be seen in far-away Scandinavia, in the society described in the 'Rigsmàl.' It was to be seen in Ireland where Spenser and Davies described the oppression and sufferings of the earth-tillers, the wretched tenants under the rule of a dominant caste. This key again explains the condition of society in the varied barbarism of the middle ages, when the gentle knight was held worthy of praise for plundering the villein. 'Ah, sir! truly thou dost well. For men ought always to pluck and pillage the churl, who is like the willow—it sprouteth out the better for being often cropped.'[1] Of course such a condition of society is not without redeeming features. What condition is? Thus Mr. Freeman's account of chivalry may be correct: 'The chivalrous spirit was above all a class spirit. The good knight was bound to endless fantastic courtesies towards men, and still more towards women, of a certain rank ; he may treat all below that rank with any degree

[1] Wright, *Domestic Manners and Sentiments*, p. 101.

of scorn and cruelty.'[1] Though the chivalry of history, not of romance, fell so far short of the standard of civilised humanity; yet the class courtesy and honour it inculcated formed a most useful stepping-stone to firmer ground: it at least kept men out of the slough of mere savagery.

In one direction this stage of society was favourable to culture. The true epic, the song of the chiefs celebrating heroes of definite station, whose descendants were still in the land, whose home is still a recognisable place, Ithaca or Argos,[2] belongs to this stage of social development and to no other. The epic song of Gaul is lost, swept away by the higher culture of Rome, and by the changes in religion and politics; but there is no doubt that bardic poetry was highly cultivated there as elsewhere. The story told by Posidonius, of the largess given by Lucius, king of the Arverni,[3] reminds one of Demodocus in the house of Alcinoüs, seated on his silver-studded throne. The myth of King Breas shows the honour given to the bard in Ireland under the rule of the military caste. The king had insulted a stranger bard by want of hospitality; the clan of the Tuatha de Danann he ruled over deposed him, and the entire nation held that the deposition was just.[4]

In any society under the government of the warlike caste, and so long as it remains under such government, we may expect to find certain elementary virtues, such

[1] *Norman Conquest*, vol. v. p. 482.
[2] Lang, *Custom and Myth*, p. 158.
[3] Ampère, *Hist. Lit. de la France*, vol. i. p. 65.
[4] O'Curry, *MS. Materials for Irish History*, p. 249.

as valour, fidelity to leaders, hospitality; and we do find them everywhere. The development of a certain form of poetry, occupying itself in celebrating the prowess and achievements of the chiefs and their ancestors, is natural; and we find it everywhere. A certain skill too in handicrafts, the highest work being directed to the decoration of arms, and other objects of utility and ornament, is not incompatible with this condition. But it would be vain to expect any development of true art. Society must be more settled, in every way more advanced, before art in a real sense is possible. In ancient Greece, among a people that possessed, we are told, an inherent artistic faculty, so long as this stage of organisation continued art had no existence. Speaking of the early Greeks, Mr. Grote writes,[1] 'Neither coined money, nor the art of writing, nor painting, nor sculpture, nor imaginative architecture belong to the Homeric and Hesiodic times. Such rudiments of arts, destined ultimately to acquire great development in Greece, as may have existed in these early days, served only as a sort of nucleus to the fancy of the poet, to shape out for himself the fabulous creations ascribed to Hephaestus or Daedalus.' No statues of the gods (wrought by men), not even of wood, are mentioned in the Homeric poems.[2] Odysseus, who figures as a skilful artisan, building a ship and adorning

[1] *History of Greece*, vol. i. p. 503.

[2] According to the description of the shield of Achilles, there was a great variety of figures carved upon it, and those of Mars and Minerva were forged of gold—to mark their divinity. But the whole work is ascribed to the god Vulcan, and is treated as beyond mortal artificers—a poetic fancy. (*Iliad*, xviii. 468.)

the bedstead he constructs with gold, silver, and copper, is scarcely an artist. He is master of every craft, almost a magician; yet we are not told that even his art included the representation of living forms.[1]

When the Romans came in contact with the inhabitants of Transalpine Gaul, the most advanced people they encountered in that country were the Arverni. These were clearly about the level of the Homeric Greeks; they were richer, and had learnt from their Grecian neighbours of Massalia the use of coined money, but in other respects they were in the condition of the heroic age. When the Roman citizens gazed with wonder at the figure of the captive King Bituitus, as he appeared at the triumph of his victors Domitius and Fabius, clad in his variegated armour and mounted in his silver chariot as he had fought, they seemed to see, as it were, an apparition of Agamemnon equipped for battle wearing his armour, the costly gift of Cinyras.

If the Gauls had formed a strong national union based on national feeling, they might have defied Germans and Romans alike; as under like conditions of union the Anglo-Saxons would never have been conquered by Danes or Normans. Such national feeling is, however, of slow growth, and to expect it in a people only superficially civilised here and there, like the inhabitants of Gaul, is out of the question.

The eighty cantons of Gaul had never been subjected to the strokes of the mighty Nasmyth's hammer which forges nations; that implies obedience to a common law, and behind that law, necessarily, a supreme

[1] Gladstone, *Juventus Mundi*, p. 522.

force, the condition of all order. The Gauls were not and could not be capable of any grand combinations, and the question was simply whether their country should fall to the Germans or to the Romans. The Romans busied themselves in extending the Province by annexing one of the fairest portions of Europe, the southern districts of France. They weakened the most powerful canton on their frontier, that of the Arverni, and placed the Aedui in the leading position. The Aedui were declared 'brothers of the Roman nation'; but when the German chief Ariovistus invaded Gaul, defeated the Aedui, and established himself with 120,000 warriors on Gallic soil, the Romans refused to aid their 'brethren,' and enrolled Ariovistus among the allies of Rome. Then the greatest general and politician the world ever saw came on the scene, drove Ariovistus back across the Rhine, and annexed the entire territory of Gaul in the course of his eight great campaigns.

That Roman conquests and Roman intrigues had weakened the power of the cantons is no doubt true; but that this decline was due to racial causes more profound than the obvious political ones is a mere theoretical assumption.

## ESSAY IV.

# THE GERMANS.

### LONG CONTINUED BACKWARDNESS IN CIVILISATION, AND TARDY ADVANCE.

# THE GERMANS.

HAVING taken a glance at the progress in civilisation made in Gaul and some of the Roman provinces, we may now turn to the progress made in independent Germany.

Professor Max Müller, when he wishes to give his readers an idea of the social condition of Aryans in their hypothetical home in Central Asia, turns to the 'Germania' of Tacitus as a picture of that condition. By doing so the Professor indicates very clearly the unprogressive character of German life in early ages. If the researches of Dr. Montelius[1] are really well established; if it be a fact that a Teutonic people has occupied Scandinavia for at least 4,000 years; the occupation of Germany by Aryans coming from Central Asia must have been very ancient indeed. Yet in all the long period which elapsed between their settlement in Europe and the date of the compilation of Tacitus, the Germans had made no marked advance in civilisation above that they enjoyed in their original country. This slow progress, if true, is nothing remarkable; it indicates no

[1] *Antiquités Suédoises.*

special unprogressive tendency in the Teutonic race, such as we commonly attribute to the Chinese, and used till lately to attribute to the Japanese. It merely shows that a people left to themselves, inhabiting a country out of the way of intercourse with others, tends to become stationary. The great historian Niebuhr asserted that 'no single example can be brought forward of an actually savage people having independently become civilised.'[1] This statement was appropriated by Archbishop Whately, and made the foundation of his 'Lecture on the Origin of Civilisation,' which he contends must have been established by a kind of Divine revelation. The proposition, though not perhaps able to bear the deduction made from it by the eminent Archbishop, is historically true—true within the limits of known history, as the doctrine *omne vivum ex vivo* is undoubtedly true within the limits of known Science.

The historical fact that no savages have ever been known to civilise themselves independently can be extended to the statement that the progress of all rude peoples when left to themselves is extremely slow. It is also sufficiently clear, even among civilised peoples, that any causes tending to produce temporary isolation from others powerfully check the vigorous movement which characterises healthy life in a nation.

However, be this as it may, the fact is certain that the Germans in Germany were unprogressive; and it is equally certain that it was through no fault in the race, which has since shown itself as capable of progress as the Greeks themselves.

[1] Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, vol. i. p. 37.

The condition of the early Germans was simply that of Aryan savages or barbarians—(it is needless to discuss the precise meaning of such vague terms)—the same condition in fact as that of the early Greeks, the early Italic nations, or the ancient Celts. Strictly comparable habits, customs and modes of life prevailed among them all. They all lived in kindred clans, had chiefs surrounded by chosen warriors; they elected in some way temporary war-kings to lead them in battle; they were mainly pastoral peoples, were lazy in work and loved fighting. They plundered and enslaved neighbouring peoples and clans. They had invented some form of intoxicating drink and some games of chance, so they gambled, got drunk, and quarrelled among themselves, as is the habit of savages. They had, as common enough, some rude form of nature-worship, and they practised divination. Tacitus notes, as peculiar to the Germans, a method of learning the will of the gods from the neighing of a sacred breed of horses;[1] the priests or chiefs were thought to understand the meaning of the noises made by these inspired animals, and their interpretation was received with profound respect.

The Germans, according to Tacitus, lived in scattered hamlets of rude dwellings, each surrounded by its little close.[2] The hovels were of the rudest workmanship, and must have been, with their surroundings, extremely filthy, if one may judge from the means the inhabitants adopted of concealing the entrance to the subterranean stores in which they hid their corn, to preserve it in

[1] *Germania*, 10. [2] *Ibid.* 16.

cases of sudden attack. The expedient was simple: they covered the holes with abundance of filth, 'eosque multo insuper fimo onerant.'[1] They were then undistinguishable from the rest of the premises. Similar holes discovered by our antiquaries in England and Ireland had no doubt the same origin and use, and were probably hidden with the same primitive ingenuity. In these unsanitary dwellings the youth grew up to manhood, dirty and naked, yet they became large and strong of limb. 'In omni domo nudi ac sordidi, in hos artus in haec corpora quae miramur, excrescunt.' Arrived to manhood each youth received his spear and buckler, and became a soldier of the barbaric kind. They were good for the first onslaught, but could not suffer fatigue—'magna corpora et tantum ad impetum valida; laboris atque operum non eadem patientia.'[2] In this respect they agree in a remarkable manner with Livy's account of the Gauls, *primo impetu feroces*.[3] The Germans, like the Gauls, were undoubtedly brave and their first onslaught was terrible; but, as they had not learnt to submit to discipline, they were sure to be defeated when opposed to any adequate force of disciplined troops. Tacitus tells us that the Catti alone had something of soldierly qualities: they obeyed the orders of their chiefs; they had learnt to preserve their ranks; their leaders knew something of strategy; and their discipline was shown by trusting rather to the skill of their commander than to their own personal efforts. The rest, says Tacitus, go to battle; the Catti make war. 'Alios

[1] *Germania*, 16. [2] *Ibid.* 4.

[3] Livy x. 28.

ad praelium ire videas, Cattos ad bellum.'[1] It is not difficult to see how the Catti attained this exceptional excellence in the art of war. They were neighbours of the Batavi, and engaged in constant warfare with them. The Batavi were trained Roman auxiliaries, retained by the Romans as weapons for attack and defence, and were free from taxes and imposts.[2] The vicinage of such a people is quite sufficient to explain the superiority of the Catti to the other Germans.

Steady courage, the courage that can wait, that is akin to delay, as headlong impetuosity is akin to fear, is not to be found among barbarians or undisciplined peasants. The barbarian goes to war in a boastful and careless spirit, and earns for himself assured defeat from a civilised foe. Florus describes the German allies, the Cherusci, the Suevi and the Sicambri, dividing the anticipated spoils before engaging in battle with Drusus. The Cherusci chose the horses; the Sicambri the captives; but the Suevi, being I suppose short in the supply of torques, chose the gold and silver. *Dîs aliter visum.* The allies, flushed as they were by the previous surprise of a Roman detachment, which gave them the opportunity of burning twenty centurions alive as a sort of preliminary sacrifice, were easily and totally routed. Florus describes their fate with grim brevity: 'Victor namque Drusus equos, pecora, torques eorum, ipsosque praedâ divisit et vendîdit.'[3] The same boastful spirit marks the message of Ariovistus to Cæsar, and the same quick fate overtook him. The same utter lack of dis-

[1] *Germania*, 30. [2] *Ibid.* 29.
[3] Annaeus Florus, iv. c. 12.

cipline and self-restraint is shown by Tacitus's account of the battle between Caecina and Arminius. Arminius, a skilled leader, had chosen a fitting place for his attack: nothing saved Caecina from the fate of Varus but the greed for plunder of the Germans, and their disregard of the orders of their leader, who wished to defer the attack until the Romans broke up the hastily formed camp, and were again entangled among the marshes and woods that hindered their progress. Tacitus describes the joy of the Roman legionaries to meet their enemy on firm ground, the abject dismay, speedy flight, and almost unresisting slaughter of the Germans—as helpless in difficulties as they were presumptuous in prosperity, 'ut rebus secundis avidi, ita adversis incauti.'[1]

With these facts before us it is curious to find a great German historian permitting national prejudices to influence his judgment so far as to speak of 'the utter incapacity to preserve a self-reliant courage, equally remote from presumption and pusillanimity,' as a racial characteristic of the Gauls and Irish, implying a superiority in this respect in the Teutonic race. Nothing can possibly be clearer than the fact that such a quality is utterly unknown to undisciplined barbarians, whether they happen to be Gauls or Greeks, Teutons or Celts.

Tacitus attributes to the Germans the possession of some virtues which he represents as lost by the civilised Romans. They were, he says, chaste in their lives. The often quoted passage in the 'Germania'—'Plusque ibi boni mores valent quam alibi bonae leges'—seems to have gained for him the lasting gratitude of the Germans.

[1] *Annales*, i. 48.

'To every German, to every member of the Teutonic race,' says Professor Max Müller of the 'Germania,'[1] 'it has always been a kind of national charter, a picture of the golden age adorned with all that is considered most perfect, pure, and noble in human nature.' To have this German Utopia described by an eye-witness seems to the learned Professor as a blessing to the Teutonic world. Now, passing over the point that there is not a shred of evidence to show that Tacitus ever set his foot on German soil, I venture to think that the 'Germania' has been rather a curse than a blessing. To foster national vanity is never good, and to distort history is always evil. Now, the slight praise, scanty as it is, bestowed by Tacitus on the Germans, together with the implied censure on civilisation which pervades this as well as the other works of the author, have done both.

The merits of Tacitus as a writer have obscured his faults. 'Nothing,' says Professor Mahaffy, 'shows more clearly the wonderful importance of style and literary genius than the way in which such authors as Thukydides and Tacitus blind modern commentators in questions of evidence. Tacitus has been clearly proved, from his own statements, thoroughly untrustworthy; and Thukydides, though more consistent, may yet be convicted of strong partiality.'[2]

The fierce resistance offered by the Germans to the progress of the Roman army is frequently adduced as a proof of their exceptional patriotism and love of independence, while the nations that finally accepted a life

[1] *Nineteenth Century*, January 1885, p. 127.
[2] *Prolegomena to Ancient History*, p. 32, note.

of civilisation under Roman rule are reproached with a want of national feeling. The truth is, the sentiment of nationality influences few minds powerfully even now, and in barbarous times and countries it cannot exist at all. The barbarians conquered by the Romans were not nations, and had no sense of a common tie. What the Romans conquered were petty States and tribes engaged in constant and furious wars among themselves. What they gave to these was order and wealth in lieu of disorder and poverty; a life regulated by rational law instead of subjection to the capricious tyranny of irresponsible chiefs; freedom from the senseless confusions of a worthless rabble, or, as in Gaul and parts of Germany, the cruel despotism of a crafty priesthood.

Such barbaric forms of government are as much founded on opinion as the most civilised régime. The barbarian will cling to usages and habits, the outcome of his condition, with a tenacity proportional to his barbarism. Trade and industrial life are the great solvents of barbarism: wherever, as in parts of Gaul, they had taken root, men were prepared to accept civilised life; where they were absent, law and order were fiercely rejected. In almost uncivilised Britain the establishment of Roman rule appeared at first nearly hopeless, and in totally uncivilised Germany it proved to be wholly hopeless. It was not any peculiarity in the German nature that caused the Germans to reject Roman civilisation. Wherever they had made some progress in trade and industrial life, the Germans, as shown by the Ubii, welcomed order as eagerly as the partially civilised Gauls.

It is now common to claim the sympathy of mankind for the efforts of savages to retain their savagery. It is spoken of as if it were the same as a civilised love of independence, a feeling that deserves respect. But it is plain that the conquest of barbarous people by a civilised power may be sometimes a duty, that it is in general beneficial to the barbarians themselves, and in that respect it is justifiable. It was a duty incumbent on Charlemagne to conquer the Saxons, and even to crush them beneath his stern military rule. 'A long and deplorable experience had already shown that the Frankish people had neither peace nor security to expect for a single year, so long as their Saxon neighbours retained their heathen rites and the ferocious barbarism inseparable from them. Fearful as may be the dilemma "submit or perish," it is that to which every nation, even in our own times, endeavours to reduce a host of invading and desolating foes; nor, if we ourselves were now exposed to similar inroads, should we offer our assailants conditions more gentle or less peremptory.'[1]

In such cases conquest becomes a duty, the neglect of which will produce sooner or later disastrous results. In an evil hour for herself and the future of humanity Rome determined to stop in her career of civilising conquests, and to establish a scientific frontier.

There were many things which made such a policy apparently advisable. Though it was not very difficult to conquer a German army—even Ariovistus himself, with his host of hardy veterans, could not resist the

[1] Sir James Stephen, *Lectures on the History of France*, vol. i. p. 92

steady valour of the Roman legionaries—yet it was not easy to conquer Germany. The people submitted readily enough, but, as Charlemagne found afterwards, their submission did not mean much; they loved their barbarous ways, and soon after professing obedience and entering into treaties, they were ready on the first opportunity to rise in hot and destructive revolt.

In considering the terrible prevalence of untruthfulness and perjury in re-barbarised Europe, we must not let ourselves be led astray by the undoubtedly high value which the Teutonic conquerors placed on what they understood as *Treue*. To be *untreu* was the greatest possible stain on a man's character. But *Treue* was not 'truth,' and meant simply faithfulness to one's friends or lord, to the members of the clan or guild, to the chief or master, and had little or no connection with veracity. Nay, it was a quality which must have led to personal untruthfulness in very many cases, for the true-man would almost of necessity be quite ready to commit perjury, by taking the compurgatorial oath to clear his lord or guild brother. If any one permitted a scruple to interfere with his discharge of a plain duty like this, he would no doubt suffer all the social excommunication and danger resulting from the odious imputation of being *untreu*. So far, indeed, were the Germans from being *treu* in the sense of truthful that their mendacity, as well as their ferocity, was always spoken of by ancient writers as one of their characteristics.

The want of faith among the uncivilised Germans, and the impossibility of binding them by any treaties, combined with the tendency to treacherous revolts, were

serious difficulties in the conquest of Germany. The country itself, too, seemed to the Romans hardly worth fighting for. Tacitus describes it as in general bristling with forests, or loathsome from swamps. 'In universum aut silvis horrida, aut paludibus foeda.'[1] A campaign in such a country was necessarily as hazardous as its conquest was worthless; while the inhabitants appeared to the Romans of the Augustan age, in the words of Velleius Paterculus,[2] as a people having nothing human about them but their limbs and speech, and such as the sword could not conquer. Varus dreamed that this people could be civilised by the influence of the Roman law, but to his cost he soon discovered his mistake. Augustus, terrified by the massacre in the Teutoburger-Wald, determined for the future to guard the frontier of the Rhine; this under the circumstances seemed perhaps the best, as it was clearly the easiest, policy. Similarly in Britain the Romans pushed on their conquests till they reached an apparently worthless region of mountain, forest, and swamp; there they built their wall and established their line of defence. The notion of the conquest of Ireland was abandoned.

In their race theory, as in their patriotism, the Germans have the ardour of neophytes. The fathers and grandfathers of the amiable and erudite men who write huge pamphlets—called history—for the edification of fatherland would have been scarcely able to understand the meaning of patriotism. Lessing, a German of Germans, the man who freed his country for the first time from literary bondage to France, the most notable

[1] *Germania*, 5. [2] Lib. ii. c. 117.

figure in the German thought-world of the last century, confessed his inability to understand love of country. This great man expressed the common feeling of Germans of his day when he wrote, 'Of love of country I have no conception; it appears to me at best but an heroic weakness, which I am right glad to be without.'[1]

There was in truth no Fatherland. Germany at the beginning of the present century was divided, not into eighty cantons, like Gaul in Cæsar's time, but into three hundred States of varying degrees of insignificance, down to such absurdities as the territory of Baron Grote.[2] This potentate had ruled right royally over a single farm, and when the great Frederick chanced to pass through his domain, the Baron gave him a fraternal embrace, saying, 'Behold the meeting of two sovereigns.' All this is ludicrous enough to us, but it was serious matter for the subjects of the petty despots.

Johannes von Müller thus described the condition of Germany: 'To exist without law or justice, without security from arbitrary imposts, doubtful whether we can preserve from day to day our children, our honour, our liberties, our rights, our lives; helpless before superior force, without a beneficial connection between our States, without a national spirit at all, this is the *status quo* of our nation.'[3] How bitter must have been to every German with a spark of national feeling that crowning ignominy of 1806, when sixteen German

[1] Bryce, *Holy Roman Empire*, p. 357.
[2] Baring Gould, *Germany Past and Present*, p. 22.
[3] Bryce, *Holy Roman Empire*, p. 357.

States repudiated the Empire and their ancient laws, to grovel at the feet of the French Emperor! Germany lay speechless, almost mindless, under the evil spell of *Kleinstädterei.* To rouse the nation from its torpor, to give to it unity and a voice in Europe commensurate to its wide extent and ample population, was the great task which lay before the rising patriotism of Germany. Well and nobly have they performed their work, and in that work all, whether Celts or Teutons, must feel a sympathetic interest. To perform any work you must use some instruments, and the only lever to move the still sluggish German world was the appeal to pride of race. No wonder then that the patriotic writers of Germany have been the chief architects of the race theory, and insist on the great qualities of the Teutonic race and the happiness of belonging to it, and draw the strongest possible line between it and the inferior races.

Not very many years ago one might have pointed to Germany as an unprogressive country, a somnolent land in which mediæval slavery was only dying out slowly, and where the harsh notions of caste, obsolete elsewhere, still ruled the popular mind; a country split into little States, as in ancient days, without any public spirit, and which, though it had flooded other countries with wild legends and curious folk-lore, and produced a number of misty philosophers, poets, musicians, and artists of eminence, had scarcely given birth to a real statesman or political thinker of mark. Germany looked like a social and political failure. Of such a country one might be tempted to say that its people were in-

dolent and poetical, irresolute and fervid, inquisitive, credulous, amiable, clever; but, in a political point of view, a thoroughly useless nation. And, in fact, we used to say much of this kind. We laughed at Germany and her Pumpernickels and Potzenthals, quizzed German dreamers, and those wonderful scholars—'never content till they have demonstrated all facts to be fictions, and all fictions to be facts.'

Since those days other nations have learnt, at least partially, that trained intelligence is a very real force in the world. In peace we acknowledge the Germans to be our teachers in most things, and in war we recognise the power of thinking bayonets. Perhaps, in changing from a position of careless superciliousness to one of profound respect, we have also gone too far in adopting the German notion as to the origin of German learning and science.

Evil as was the state of Germany till recent times, its condition was in several important respects favourable to the growth of learning. The multiplications of centres of Government led to the multiplication of universities; and though these seats of learning were in the eighteenth century little better than homes of pedantry, and perhaps deserved the contempt lavished on them by Carlyle's pet Frederick—'One pinch of common-sense is worth a university full of learning' is said to have been a dictum of this potentate—still they had come into being, and were capable of more valuable work. A despot of lower intelligence than fell to the lot of Frederick will often encourage learning; it reflects credit on himself at a cheap rate, and keeps busy minds

engaged in harmless studies which might else be mischievously directed to politics. It would be hard to estimate the intellectual benefit that Germany has derived from her three-and-twenty universities.

A very able writer has pointed out the favourable influence which the caste system, evil as it was in other respects, exercised on the intellectual growth of Germany. The monopoly of all military and political power by the nobility, the comparatively small dimensions of German trade till quite recently, and other general social circumstances, concurred either in drawing or driving the élite of the lower and middle classes in Germany into some department of learning as the most accessible and promising sphere of ambition; whereas in France and England the most powerful and varied influences combined to attract them elsewhere. While the best minds among the youth of Germany were permanently gained to the service of science and literature by being drawn into the professoriate of its numerous local and rival universities, similar minds were in France drawn into the vortex of Parisian society, and there lost to learning by absorption in financial speculation, political intrigue, journalistic ambitions, and by all the caprices, aims, disappointments and successes of a fleeting and feverish day. But the juristical school of Cujas, the philosophical school of Descartes, the French Benedictines, the French mathematicians and physicists, who adorned with such profusion the earlier part of the present century, have conclusively proved that Frenchmen are not necessarily, or in virtue of any essential characteristics of their nature, either less pro-

found or less industrious, less original or less persevering than Germans.[1]

There is another circumstance of which account must be taken in considering the causes leading to the present commanding intellectual position of Germany. The century which elapsed between the close of the ruinous Thirty Years' War and the middle of the eighteenth century is called by Schlegel 'our proper age of barbarism, a sort of chaotic interregnum in the history of German literature.'[2] Germany had to undergo a revival, political, social, and intellectual; and the men of the recent past whose works we know, or at least have heard of, and the men who have been instructed by them and have inherited their traditions, were the heroes of a veritable renaissance, with all the enthusiasm which belongs to such a period. The stirring of men's minds under such circumstances gives rise to great results and great intellectual exertions. When France began to recover from the frightful anarchy and degradation, social and intellectual, into which the barbaric conquest had thrown her, she rapidly assumed the leading position in the knowledge of the day. The head and centre of the intellectual life of mediæval Europe was the University of Paris.[3]

As the more ardent students of mediæval times, like our own Roger Bacon, then found their way to Paris, so many eager workers now find their way to Berlin. In the age of the Renaissance, and for long afterwards, the true

[1] Professor Flint, *Philosophy of History*, p. 217.
[2] *History of Literature*, vol. ii. p. 259. Eng. transl. 1818.
[3] Rev. H. Rashdall, *English Historical Review*, vol. i. p. 639.

culture-land was Italy, 'that great limbique of working braines';[1] during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries crowds of scholars, physicists, and physicians flocked thither to complete their studies. It is therefore only a foolish vanity which leads any one nation to fancy that it possesses inborn gifts different from those of others, such as enable it by these alone to maintain a permanent intellectual superiority.

[1] Howell, *Forraine Travell.* Arber's Reprint, p. 41.

# ESSAY V.

## AN EXAMINATION OF SEVERAL EXAMPLES RELIED ON AS CONFIRMING THE RACE THEORIES.

## AN EXAMINATION OF SEVERAL EXAMPLES RELIED ON AS CONFIRMING THE RACE THEORIES.

So far I have endeavoured to point out some of the assumptions and errors underlying the commonly received doctrine of national characters. I shall now proceed to examine in some detail a passage from one of the greatest of living historians, in which these errors and assumptions are grouped together, and are, as I think, abundantly illustrated.[1]

'On the eve of parting from this remarkable nation, we may be allowed to call attention to the fact, that in the accounts of the ancients as to the Celts on the Loire and the Seine we find almost every one of the characteristic traits which we are accustomed to recognise as marking the Irish. Every feature re-appears: the laziness in the cultivation of the fields; the delight in tippling and brawling; the ostentation, the droll humour,

[1] Mommsen, *History of Rome*, vol. iv. pp. 286–7. I give the passage as it is printed in the late Mr. Richey's *Lectures on the History of Ireland*, replacing one clause accidentally omitted. It has been slightly abridged by Mr. Richey, some clauses of considerable length being left out of the principal sentence, which is, however, quite long enough as it stands.

the hearty delight in singing and reciting the deeds of past ages; the most decided talent for rhetoric and poetry; the curiosity—no trader was allowed to pass till he had told in open street what he knew, or what he did not know; the extravagant credulity which acted on such accounts; the childlike piety which sees in the priest a father, and asks for his advice in all things; the unsurpassed fervour of national feeling, and the closeness with which those who are fellow-countrymen cling together, almost like one family, in opposition to a stranger; the inclination to rise in revolt under the first chance leader that presents himself, and to form bands, but at the same time the incapacity to preserve the self-reliant courage equally remote from presumption and from pusillanimity, to perceive the right time for striking and for waiting, to attain or indeed to tolerate any organisation, any sort of fixed military or political discipline. It is, and remains at all times and all places, the same indolent and poetical, irresolute and fervid, inquisitive, credulous, amiable, clever, but in a political point of view thoroughly useless nation, and therefore its fate has been always and everywhere the same.'

If 'the characteristic traits which we are now accustomed to recognise as marking the Irish' are, as I believe them to be, simply the habits of the Irish peasants of the last century caricatured more or less by popular writers, we might reasonably expect to find them among any rude people taken at random. Ireland lay remote from the general current of commerce in former days, and must necessarily be less advanced as a whole than more favoured portions of Europe. Peasants in all

countries are, as a rule, unprogressive, and the peasants of a wild, remote, and backward country must be particularly so. It would not be surprising therefore to find many of the habits of barbarism lingering among them in such a position. Even in England at the present day the mental condition of the lower orders in remote places is instructive, as showing how unprogressive an isolated portion of the people may be, though in a highly progressive country. Hence the features ascribed to the traditional Irishman would also appear in primitive Gaul, and might, in some traits, be even better seen among any people more barbarous than the Gauls—for example, among the Germans of the same epoch. On examining the statements in detail we find this to be really the case.

*Laziness in the cultivation of the fields.* Mommsen relies for the alleged idleness of the Gauls on a passage from Cicero[1] to the effect that a free Celt considered it a disgrace to till his fields with his own hands; this appeared a very high offence to the civilised and agriculture-loving Romans. This dislike to field labour had not, however, prevented the Gauls from making considerable advances in the art of tilling the soil. Mr. Elton points out that Pytheas, a contemporary of Alexander the Great, found the Britons of the south coast, who were undoubtedly Gallic, busily engaged in agricultural work; and he particularly noted the covered barns in which the corn was threshed, the uncertainty of the climate making shelter desirable for such work.

[1] Quoted vol. i. p. 334, and again referred to vol. iv. p. 217.

Mommsen himself tells us [1] that the continental Gauls surprised the Romans by using marl as manure. The free Gaul very probably preferred war to any kind of labour ; and no doubt the sword alone was honourable for the freeman or the noble, words almost synonymous in societies organised on the primitive militant type, as was that of Gaul.

But this state of things passed away very rapidly when the Roman conquest introduced the *pax Romana.* Strabo, writing about thirty years after Cæsar's time, remarks that the Gauls no longer think of war, but devote all their attention to agriculture and peaceful pursuits ; [2] and their strenuous industry in subsequent times is a fact easily established. A far closer parallel can be drawn between the laziness of the Irish and of the ancient Germans. Rate Irish industry as low as you please, you can hardly make the modern Celt equal in indolence to the Teuton of Tacitus. Cæsar's account of German industry is very unfavourable : 'They do not apply themselves to agriculture, they pass their whole lives in hunting and war.' But in Tacitus the charge of slothfulness is frequently repeated and strongly expressed. He says that 'the Germans prefer war to industry, and deem it a deep disgrace to obtain by their sweat what they can acquire by bloodshed. In peace they are mere sluggards, not very active even in the chase, given up altogether to sleep and gluttony. The care of their houses and the cultivation of the land were left to the old men, women, weaklings, and slaves ; the warrior youth lounge away their time.'

[1] Vol. iv. p. 217. [2] Fustel de Coulanges, p. 59.

Such is the very depressing account of the state of industry among our Teutonic forefathers in the 'Germania' of Tacitus, a work which, as we have already seen,[1] is 'to every German, to every member of the Teutonic race . . . a kind of national charter, a picture of a golden age adorned with all that is considered perfect, pure, and noble in human nature.' This slothfulness is one of the blots marring the picture of a golden age, which Professor Max Müller relies on to prove the complete truthfulness of the 'Germania' as a representation of Teutonic life. For, he argues, if Tacitus had wanted to represent a German Utopia, he would not have introduced into his picture such shadows as sloth, drunkenness, cruelty, love of gambling and brawling.

This argument, however, is scarcely so decisive as its learned author thinks. The Roman literary world of the age of Tacitus must have been fairly well acquainted with the manners and customs of Germany. Cæsar and many other writers, above all Pliny, must have made such matter sufficiently familiar. The loss of Pliny's work on Germany is unfortunate, as M. Littré remarks: 'Il est bien à regretter que l'ouvrage de Pline sur la Germanie ait péri; il la connaissait et n'était aucunement engoué de la vie barbare.'[2] Besides these sources of information there were in different parts of the Empire, outside the German provinces, German slaves, *coloni* and mercenaries who would make German habits tolerably well known. Under such circumstances the description of 'an ideal barbarism' would have been

[1] Max Müller, *Nineteenth Century*, January 1885, p. 127.
[2] Littré, *Les Barbares*, p. 89.

simply out of the question. All that could then be urged would be that the Germans were barbarians, as we must confess, but that their barbarism had preserved in them virtues of which civilisation had robbed the Romans. The opinion of Guizot, Littré, and many other scholars, that the 'Germania' is coloured by the political views of its author, is not to be lightly set aside; and if such men have been 'misguided by national prejudice,' as Professor Max Müller thinks, surely those who treasure the 'Germania' as a national charter and a picture of a golden age may also be misguided in the same way.

The laziness in the cultivation of the fields, so strongly marked among the early Germans, is not to be taken as a necessary portion of their national character. It was simply a note of a low social condition, with them as with every other people.

We sometimes seem to forget that labour is not an end in itself, but merely a means to an end—obtaining food or bettering one's condition. If a man has sufficient food, or does not see how labour will benefit him, the probability is that he will not work, but will prefer to amuse himself as best he may. Such is the almost universal condition of barbarians, and circumstances may continue these habits in nations and classes when they can no longer be fairly called barbarous. It is by the teaching of necessity that mankind has learnt industry. A quaint old writer [1] says of the Dutch, 'You shall see the most industrious people on the earth making a rare virtue of necessity; for the same thing that makes a parrot to speak makes them to labour.'

[1] Howell, *Forraine Travell.*

*Delight in tippling and brawling.* The Gauls, like all barbarians, loved wine. The Stoic Julian, a vegetarian and water-drinker, confessed with sorrow this blot on the Celtic character, the only one he acknowledged in the brave, honest, and simple Gauls,[1] whom he knew well and valued highly. Ammianus Marcellinus says that some Gauls of the lower classes were almost constantly drunk or stupid from drink: 'Et inter eos humiles quidem obtusis ebrietate continuâ sensibus.'[2] The life of the upper classes, to be gathered from the works of Ausonius, Rutilius, Symmachus and Sidonius Apollinaris, in Gaul as elsewhere in the Empire, does not support the otherwise improbable exaggeration of Salvian.[3]

The life of the Gallic nobles, as we have already shown, presents a picture of men much engaged in the discharge of public functions; they passed their leisure in their splendid country houses, where they occupied themselves in hunting, and in the enjoyment of music and literature; each villa had its library.[4] With them were associated in graceful domestic life women as cultured as themselves. It cannot reasonably be supposed that these people indulged in drunken habits such as were foreign to the other members of the upper classes in the civilised Roman world.

The 'national charter' introduces us to another order of things. Men are no longer subjected to the enervating influences of civilisation, and untrammeled by conventionality they use their freedom to get drunk.

[1] Gibbon, vol. iii. p. 236. Ed. 1825.
[2] Lib. xv. c. 12.
[3] Fustel de Coulanges, pp. 277 *et seq.*
[4] *Ibid.* p. 278.

The Germans, says Tacitus, think it no disgrace to any one to drink all day and all night; the brawls are frequent, as usual among drunkards, and rarely end in mere insults, but more usually lead to wounds and slaughter.[1]

*Ostentation of the Gauls and Irish.* There is no ostentation in Utopia! Elsewhere men generally value themselves too highly and wish others to appraise them at the same, or perhaps a higher, rate. The reasonable desire of approbation—or vanity, as morose moralists may call it—can scarcely be accounted a vice; it is rather a virtue, though its manifestations may be often absurd. The methods pursued to gain credit with our fellows of course vary as habits and customs change. The feeble native of the Gaboon who, when he manages to scrape together a few pence, buys a bunch of keys which he hangs round his neck, thereby to impress the public with an extensive idea of the wealth of boxes he possesses at home, and the brave Leonidas of Thermopylae are possibly both extreme examples of the desire of fame, but very differently exhibited!

Societies under caste rule, or retaining the traditions and habits of such a condition, will most readily honour the qualities of a caste, and so long as wealth is for the most part confined to the caste—haughty self-assertion, lavish and ostentatious display. Such was the condition of Roman society towards the fall of the Empire as described by Ammianus Marcellinus. The Empire had nearly destroyed the political power of the Roman nobles; but their wealth and social power remained, and with it the love of ostentatious display.

[1] *Germania*, xxii.

In the Germany of the golden age there certainly were none of these luxuries. The simplicity of life described in the charter may be accounted for by an innate nobleness of character, which led the virtuous savages to despise the pomps and vanities of a wicked world; but also by the less flattering, and more probable, conjecture, that the ancient Germans led a rude life simply because they did not possess the means of living more luxuriously! Tacitus himself would, I fancy, prefer to account for the facts on the latter hypothesis. In the speech he puts into the mouth of Civilis, the Teutonic invasions of Gaul are attributed to love of pleasure, avarice, and a longing for change: 'Eadem semper causa Germanis transeundi in Gallias: libido atque avaritia et mutandae sedis amor.'[1]

The Germans displayed less ostentation in dress than was common among the Gauls and Romans, but the comparative absence of clothing among the early Germans may account for this fact simply enough. Cæsar says their clothing was an extremely scanty covering of skins.[2] Pomponius Mela tells us[3] that they wore a *sagum* or blanket, and that they used the inner bark of trees for clothing. Tacitus mentions the *sagum* as the usual dress, which he says was fastened with a bodkin or, for the want of that, a thorn; the rich according to him wore an inner tight-fitting garment, while the very poor and the natives of the interior, who could not obtain by trade better clothing, wore skins as in Cæsar's time.

There was no luxury in food, for the art of cookery

[1] *Hist.* lib. iv. c. 73. [2] Cæsar, *de Bel. Gal.* lib. iv. c. 1; lib. vi. c. 21.
[3] Lib. iii. c. 3.

was in an extremely low condition. Pomponius Mela says the Germans ate raw or frozen flesh; and Tacitus tells us[1] that they expelled hunger with the simplest food, and washed down the rudely served meal with copious draughts of a drink made from barley or wheat 'corrupted into the semblance of wine.' Those who lived near the Rhine were able to purchase from their civilised neighbours a more generous liquor than beer, with which they were no doubt in a position to enjoy more pleasurably the national pastime of getting drunk. The rudeness of their fare does not negative the charge of gluttony brought against the Germans by Tacitus in his phrase 'dediti somno ciboque'; neither would the comparative absence of clothing prevent them from indulging in the vanity of dress common to all peoples in every grade of civilisation, except perhaps the very highest. If the Germans were scantily clad, they had abundance of ornaments for personal decoration. Bones, stones, bronze and silver, with some gold, were made into tiaras, collars, necklaces, bracelets, rings, and so forth—trinkets which were no doubt the source of much harmless pleasure to their wearers. Such objects were highly valued, and were buried with their proprietors as a pious means of honouring the dead. These decorations are found in 'astounding quantities' in ancient German graves, according to Dahn.[2]

It would not be worth while to dwell on such matters, if doing so did not tend to dissipate the delusion that the Germans of Tacitus were examples 'of all that is considered most perfect, pure, and noble in human

[1] *Germania*, c. 23. [2] Dahn, *Deutsche Geschichte*, p. 147.

nature.' This notion is utterly unhistorical. It is the merest romance to attribute such a character to any primitive half-savage people. When a German speaks of 'Celtic ostentation' and 'Celtic vanity,' there is swimming before his mind the simple habits and meditative nature he attributes to his own remote ancestors. It is plain enough that the early Germans wanted none of the weaknesses and vices common to their condition, though the low development of material civilisation among them necessarily limited their self-indulgence. We have seen them described as idle, drunken, and quarrelsome; we now see, from the abundance of ornaments, that they had the love of display in one of its crudest forms.

Another instance of ostentation was the pride which each chief felt in the number of his attendants. This form of display is compatible with an extremely low stage of civilisation and is very widely diffused. We all remember Evan Dhu's admiration of his chief: 'Ah! if you Saxon Duinhe wassal saw but the chief himself with his tail on!' The Teutonic chief had his 'tail,' or *comitatus*, as Tacitus calls it, and prided himself vastly on its length. The possession of a large and warlike 'tail'—'in pace decus, in bello praesidium'—not merely gave the chief honour in his own, but spread his fame to neighbouring communities.

Another, even more archaic, and therefore more sinister, form of ostentation was remarked among the Germans. Each petty chief prided himself on the amount of desert land which surrounded his territory, and the desire of extending it was a frequent source of war.

That no one dared to live near them was their highest boast.[1] Under the archaic condition of constant warfare it was perfectly natural that a waste neutral territory, or 'march' as it was afterwards called, should be left between each community of restless savages.[2] The existence of these deserts, and the pride in them, are marked notes of barbarism.

Title-loving Germany of the present day—where an Englishman is amazed to find that he has deeply offended his tailor by not addressing him as 'high-born sir,'[3] and where such extraordinary designations as Frau Oberconsistorialdirectorin are in constant use—ought not to be too severe in denouncing the ostentation of others.

The monument erected in recent years[4] to commemorate the massacre of Varus and his legions[5] is an unwelcome instance of national vanity; and it makes

[1] Cæsar, *de Bel. Gal.* lib. vi. c. 23; Pomponius Mela, lib. iii. c. 3.

[2] 'Perhaps the sacred Pomoerium, on which no dwellings should be built, was a relic of archaic savagery handed down to civilised times' (Lubbock, *Origin of Civilisation*, p. 221).

[3] Baring Gould, *Germany Past and Present*, p. 1.

[4] A great German festival was held on August 16, 1875, when the Hermann Denkmal was unveiled, with all the military display befitting the recently unified Empire. The members of the Imperial family and the Court attended, and the proceedings were witnessed with the greatest enthusiasm by some 40,000 spectators. The monument is very conspicuously placed on a high spur of the Teutoburger range, near the small town of Detmold. The colossal statue of Arminius—now Hermann—is more than eighty feet high to the point of the boldly uplifted sword, and is well suited to arrest the passing traveller's eye.

[5] Niebuhr (*Lectures on Roman History*, English translation, vol. iii. p. 157) speaks contemptuously of the childlike confidence of Varus; but there were reasons for confidence. The conquest of Drusus appeared final. Germany, under Roman rule, was rapidly assuming the appearance

one think, if vanity leads learned Germany into such a perversion of history, what errors may it not be expected to produce in less instructed communities.

To sum up these views on ostentation, it is merely the manifestation of the common vanity of mankind. Though common to all men, it is differently expressed in different stages of social development. Ostentation in living is peculiarly prominent as a characteristic of aristocratic or caste society, particularly in its earlier forms. In ancient Gaul that form of social organisation

of a civilised country. Roads had been made, markets established, swamps drained, and the people had learnt —at least to some extent—the benefits of settled law, for the Roman tribunals were frequented. As Florus wrote: 'Ea denique in Germania pax erat, ut mutati homines, alia terra, caelum ipsum mitius molliusque solito videretur' (A. Florus, iv. 12). But there were men to whom all this was hateful—men who thought all labour a disgrace and war alone desirable; they looked with sorrow at their rusting swords and their unused war horses, and they found a fitting leader. Arminius, though of German birth, was a Roman. Like his brother Flavius, he bore a Roman name, for Arminius is not Hermann, and is the name of a Roman *gens* (Dahn, *Deutsche Geschichte*, p. 366; Niebuhr, *loc. cit.*). He had served with distinction, was a Roman citizen, and had been admitted to the equestrian order. 'By dint of the greatest perseverance' he and his fellow-conspirators had wormed themselves into the intimate friendship of Varus. Flavius was an honest soldier, and there was nothing to show that his brother was a treacherous friend. Varus was entrapped, and the terrible slaughter in the swamps of the Teutoburger-Wald perpetrated (Tacitus, *Annales*, lib. i. c. 61). Six years later Germanicus saw the shambles where the work was done. The gibbets, the pits where the prisoners were confined, the rude tribune from which Arminius had harangued, the altars before which grisly priestesses like those mentioned by Strabo (lib. vii. c. ii. § 3) had poured forth the blood of their victims, all the hideous trophies of triumphant savagery. Tacitus (*Annales*, lib. ii. c. 88) styles Arminius 'liberator haud dubie Germaniae'; in a sense he may have been a liberator, but it is certain that he consigned his countrymen to ages of barbarism, from which the unsparing sword of Charlemagne, a man of their own nation, only partially raised them eight centuries subsequently.

prevailed, and ostentation in living was clearly shown. Germany, from its necessarily slower progress, had not reached the condition of caste government as completely as Gaul. The old equality continued, and with it the old rudeness and poverty. Still rough and primitive as was ancient Teutonic life, ostentation was not absent. The nascent aristocracy of chiefs displayed their vanity in ways suitable to their condition, in profusion of ornaments, in large retinues, in the wide extent of waste lands surrounding their estates.

A tendency to boast is supposed to be a characteristic of the Celtic nature. Is it at all certain that Germans are free from this weakness? Professor Hellwald, a German whose love of country does not blind him to unpleasant facts, says: 'In other respects they (the Germans) are distinguished by a number of brilliant qualities; though it should be observed that German estimates of themselves are apt to degenerate into something akin to self-glorification. This tendency has of late years become so general as to call for the sternest reproof on the part of all who have the true interests of the people at heart.'[1]

Hence the Teutonists put together a horrible caricature portrait of others, specially the Frenchman; just as the Irish patriot has no difficulty in producing an extremely hideous representation of the Englishman—and *vice versâ*.

*Gallic and Irish humour, love of song, and talent for rhetoric and poetry.* Of exceptional Irish humour I confess to some doubts; Miss Edgeworth, Lever, Lover,

[1] Stanford, *Compendium of Geography and Travel:* 'Europe,' p. 359.

Boucicault and many others have created a type of humorous Irishman, very seldom found except in novels and on the stage. A love of joking is common to all mankind, and under certain physical conditions it is freely indulged in. There is a remarkable identity of peasant and savage wit all the world over; and, as it is manifested in practical joking, the sense of humour is not even distinctively human.[1] A large number of excellent examples of Teutonic wit could be collected from that amusing work, 'Germany Past and Present,' by Mr. Baring Gould; and England, thoroughly Germanic, as we are told, was once a land of careless gaiety.

Any one who has been to sea understands well enough the conditions leading to merriment. When the ship is running down the Trades, no need to trim a sail, the 'dog watch' is a very different affair from what it is when the same ship is working short tacks against a head wind in the Channel. If 'grub' is a little 'short' or work is hard, Jack is extremely lugubrious. The Irish peasant, in the old days before the potato blight, had abundance of wholesome and not unpalatable food. Arthur Young, seeing the plentiful meal of potatoes and milk which the Irish cottier invited the stranger to share with kindly courtesy, contrasted it with the scanty morsels of husky bread and mouldy cheese which formed the common fare of the English labourer. In this now olden time there was probably ground for the current notions of Irish fun and frolic, as there was in the yet older time when

[1] Darwin, *Descent of Man*, p. 71.

a scanty population and a fertile soil made life easy in 'merry England.'

As all mankind know how to laugh, and under favourable conditions enjoy what they consider wit and humour, so all but the merest savages have some rhythmical forms of words and sounds, or some kind of poetry and music. In early society the bard, singer, and poet had something sacred about him, and was the mouthpiece of higher powers. In the Odyssey, Ulysses honours Demodocus[1] 'because the Muse has taught all bards and loves their race; for which reason they share honour and reverence among all earthly men.' This feeling, common to all Aryans, and probably to all mankind, was marked among the Gauls and Irish by the bards forming a class of Druids, while the Germans manifested their reverence for their bards by drawing omens from their battle songs.[2] The tones of the singer presaged victory or defeat in war, the supreme business of Teutonic life. Schlegel notes with pride that an old poem of the tenth century proves that the Germans had not then forgotten the custom, mentioned by Tacitus, of inspiriting the soldiers for action by heroic song.[3]

Lied war gesungen,
Schlacht war begunnen.

One of the first things Tacitus tells us about the Germans is that they had old songs celebrating the deeds of their ancestors, and that such songs were the only

[1] *Od.* viii. 479–81. [2] Tac. *Germania*, 3.
[3] *Hist. of Lit.*, English translation, vol. i. p. 269.

history known to them. Every German glories in the Niebelungen Lied, and can truly boast that love of song has never died in Fatherland. It seems strange, therefore, that an analogy between Gauls and Irishmen should be founded on a quality which we are sometimes told is eminently Teutonic, but which is in truth world-wide.

Wherever men deliberate in large assemblies, public speaking is cultivated and honoured. In the Odyssey Ulysses upbraids Euryalus as a rude speaker, on whom the gods have not conferred the gift of persuasive words. There is a description of the orator, who, though perhaps of mean aspect, yet sways the council with his mild words, and as he passes through the city is looked on as a god.[1] The art of the singer fell from the sacred position it held in primitive times, when the bard was considered as directly inspired: it then came to be treated as a means of educating and perfecting the mind, and was finally degraded to a mere amusement; but the honours given to oratory have been more permanent. Rome, though not free under the Empire, retained two institutions in which this art of freemen was exercised, the Senate and the Forum. Rhetoric was the principal study among educated Romans, and nowhere in the Empire were imperial schools more abundant than in Gaul. The policy of the emperors scattered colleges all over the country. The means of studying an art, excellence in which enabled a man to rise from an obscure position to the highest dignities of the State, were amply provided for the Gallic provincials; and

[1] *Od.* viii. 166–173.

they availed themselves of these advantages. There seems to be but little evidence that the Gauls had any special natural bent towards oratory. Pomponius Mela certainly speaks favourably of Gallic ability in this direction. Having spoken of their former barbarity as shown by the practice of human sacrifices, he adds that they have a sort of eloquence and some learned teachers, the Druids: 'Habent tamen et facundiam suam, magistrosque sapientiae Druidas.'[1] The Gallic nobles were numerous; they held councils, and were not altogether without teachers; therefore they must have had some faculty of speech. But Diodorus speaks of the Gauls as priding themselves on an abrupt address. Cicero expresses his disgust at the threatening and horribly barbarous jargon of the Gallic deputies,[2] and Ammianus Marcellinus says that, whether pleased or angry, there was always something rough and menacing in their tones.[3] On the whole, then, it seems much more rational to attribute the large success of the classes of Gallo-Roman society in cultivating oratory to the circumstances under which they were educated, rather than to any innate faculty in the nation as a whole.

Ireland, like Gaul, has produced a considerable number of able orators; therefore current theory infers a special natural faculty in both nations, and passes over as unworthy of notice the circumstances which would naturally direct the attention, both of Gauls and Irishmen, to rhetoric. As the Roman Empire afforded an ample field for the gratification of the ambition of clever provincials, so England opens a great public career to

[1] Lib. iii. c. 2. [2] *Pro Fonteio*, xiv. [3] Lib. xv. c. 12.

Irishmen, and almost the only career which can fully satisfy a large personal ambition. In England as in Rome a ready faculty of public speaking is indispensable in public life, and public life was desired by many. Trade in so poor a country as Ireland was as a rule a petty resource, and there were also many social influences which led the Irish gentleman of the old school to regard trade and traders with an almost German contempt. That a large number of poor and proud men should under such circumstances devote themselves to an art which ensured success at the bar and in the senate is no more strange than that somewhat similar conditions should have brought about pretty nearly the same results in ancient Gaul.

I cannot bring myself to believe that the Germans are deficient in ability for oratory; that they are not so in the kindred art of poetry is sufficiently clear. Tacitus mentions eloquence as one of the qualities which conferred honour on the chiefs in their councils.[1] In the rude conditions of primitive German life the art was not likely to be highly cultivated, but the very existence of councils and debate must have developed it to some extent. No doubt until quite recently the Germans had much fewer opportunities for the exercise of public speaking than were to be found with people living under less archaic forms of government. In all probability a generation of real debating on political questions will raise German eloquence to as high a position as we now grant to German learning. There is no lack of talent for words in England; and our

[1] *Germania*, 11.

American brethren, who are so fond of speaking of themselves as members of the Anglo-Saxon race, have what one might be tempted to term a fatal facility for public speaking.

On the whole, then, in considering this group of characteristics we seem justified in concluding that 'humour' is a common attribute of mankind under certain conditions, and that in such conditions the Germanic 'race' may be as humorous as any other 'race'—that is, in their own way. The Germans are, and always have been, distinguished by 'a hearty delight in singing and reciting the deeds of past ages,' as indeed are all the rest of the world. And finally, if any real deficiency in eloquence can be observed among Germans, when compared with English, Irish, and French, such deficiency can be readily accounted for by very obvious social conditions.

*Irish and Gallic curiosity and credulity.* To say of any rude people that they are wanting in curiosity is only another way of saying that they are wanting in intelligence.[1] Nor is it easy to see how a people can be eager for information if they are determined to disbelieve what they hear. Therefore curiosity and moderate credulity are correlatives. Incredulity would be a natural mental attitude among people much given to deception, and I fear that the ancient Germans were very economical of truth. The late Mr. Coote wrote as follows[2]: 'This greed for settlements outside of the cold and humid regions of the north had corrupted the

[1] See Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Sociology*, vol. i. pp. 86–90.

[2] *The Romans in Britain*, p. 203.

virtue of the old German heart.' A people habituated to deceit would naturally be somewhat suspicious of strangers, neither eager for news nor inclined to believe what they heard.[1] The untruthfulness of the early Germans was of course only a temporary moral phase. Although some savages may be truthful among themselves, none recognise the obligation of truth towards enemies; and as all strangers appear enemies to the savage mind, the virtue of veracity is apt to dwindle by want of use. The peace and order of civilised life alone render truth possible and desirable; the introduction of such a condition quickly changed the suspicious and treacherous men of the woods into honest, simple-minded, and truthful Germans. Germany is pre-eminently the land of romance and fable; its wild legends are, and long have been, the delight of all lovers of folk-lore; the conclusion is inevitable that the people who invented and believed such tales are by no means deficient in credulity.

*Childlike piety of Gauls and Irishmen.* Mommsen does not notice a remarkable fact in the religious history of the Gauls insisted on by M. Fustel de Coulanges—the existence of some early sceptical movement which

[1] Mr. Coote was a believer in the virtues of Tacitus's Germans, but, however admirable they may have been in other respects, ancient writers before Tacitus do not represent them as possessing a regard for faith, honour, or veracity. Strabo says that the Sicambri and other nations made war without regard to hostages or the faith of treaties (Strabo, lib. vii. c. 1, sec. 4). 'Against these people mistrust was the surest defence, for those who were trusted effected the most mischief.' Velleius Paterculus speaks of the Germans as incredibly savage and cunning, 'a race born for lying.' 'At illi, quod nisi expertus vix credat, in summâ feritate versutissimi, natumque mendacio genus' (lib. ii. c. 118).

had weakened the power of the Druids before the coming of Cæsar. The Druids had been at one time supreme ; kings and people alike obeyed them ; but in Cæsar's time, though still powerful, their condition was one of decadence : forty years of Roman rule, unmarked by any real persecution, sufficed to overthrow their religious system.[1] From mediæval and modern France came that spirit which is sapping the faith of Germany and the rest of Europe. The Gallic Celt, then, shows no peculiar fervour of religious belief, and whoever calmly considers the phenomenon of Irish piety will not find himself driven to account for it by any 'Celtic' peculiarity.[2]

[1] The readinesss with which the Gauls threw aside Druidism renders extremely probable the notion, generally entertained, that this religion was of foreign origin.

[2] There are many and obvious reasons for doubting that devotion to the Catholic faith is naturally or specially inherent in the Celtic race. At least the Celts of Wales and Scotland did not adhere to it. If, then, it be supposed to be a special quality of the *Irish* branch, even with that limitation the proposition is not tenable.

In early times, about fifty years before the conquest by the English, St. Malachy describes them as 'unbelieving in religion : Christians in name, but Pagans in reality' (Morison, *Life of St. Bernard*, p. 242). At the critical time of the Reformation there was no special devotion shown by the Irish chiefs, who gladly shared the spoils of the monasteries. Soon after that the state of the Protestant Church in Ireland throughout the country was deplorable. Hardly anything worthy of the name of churches existed. In most of them no divine service was ever celebrated ; the majority of the clergy were grossly ignorant as well as indifferent, while the patrons took possession of most of the endowments (Gardiner's *History*, vol. i. p. 389).

Happily the Catholic priests were zealous, fearless, and active ; else, as a rule, heathenism would have settled down over the face of the whole country. Never did the hideous figure of persecution present itself in a Christian land in a form so repulsive as that it exhibited to the Irish Catholics.

Obedience to priests is not the special characteristic of any race, but belongs very clearly to all peoples in a certain stage of mental and social development. Tacitus tells us [1] that the government of the Semnones resembled a theocracy, and in the other German tribes the priests had the power of life and death. The Germans had no Druids. The situation and physical character of Germany hindered intercourse with more civilised nations, and necessarily stunted the mental development of the people; so the Germans had neither the opportunity of borrowing from others, nor of forming for themselves, a cultivated order of priests like the Druids; but they had priests, and obeyed them like the rest of the world. It would be well to bear in mind the words of our great historian, Gibbon: 'The same ignorance which renders barbarians incapable of conceiving or embracing the useful restraint of law, exposes them naked and unarmed to the blind terrors of superstition. The German priests, improving this favourable temper of their countrymen, had assumed a jurisdiction, even in temporal concerns, which the magistrate could not ven-

Men were ruthlessly punished for being Christians in the only form in which it was possible to be such! What wonder the spirit of indignant resistance should be aroused, and that the Irish should obstinately remain Catholic, and many of the English living amongst them join their ranks?

But the conclusive event in the religious history of the Irish was the establishment of Protestantism by Cromwell. What faint hope there might have been before of their conversion was 'destroyed by Cromwell, whose savage rule had planted in the Irish mind a hatred of Protestantism, and a hatred of England, which is even now far from extinguished' (Lecky, vol. ii. p. 229).

Thus persecution strengthens where it fails to kill!

[1] *Germania*, 39.

ture to exercise; and the haughty warrior patiently submitted to the lash of correction when it was inflicted, not by any human power, but by the immediate order of the god of war.' [1]

*Fervour of national feeling of Gauls and Irish.* M. Fustel de Coulanges has very learnedly investigated the condition of Gaul in the age of the Roman Conquest, and that condition was one of nearly complete disunion. We have already seen that the country was divided into eighty cantons of unequal size. There was no common tie or sense of a common country. The cantons were constantly at war with each other, nor was there internal peace within the narrow bounds of each petty State. In each there was an aristocratic party, which as a rule sided with Cæsar. From the first day of his invasion Cæsar found allies among the Gauls, and this resource never failed him. The democratic armies of Gaul are described as mere mobs, and were so because the regular soldiers, the military caste, the order of knights, were either in Cæsar's camp or serving the ordered governments in his alliance. Cæsar's army contained very few Romans; Alpine and Narbonaise Gauls composed his legions, northern Gauls his auxiliaries, and above all his cavalry. Such, in brief, are the leading features of 'the unexampled fervour of national feeling' among the Gauls as described by M. Fustel de Coulanges, and it is of a piece with that of the Irish and Germans.

To speak of Irishmen clinging together as one family' seems very like a grim joke. *Incuriosus suorum*

[1] *Decline and Fall*, vol. i. p. 372.

was the character assigned to the Irishman by an early satirist, and the want of national feeling and the preference for strangers have been pretty constant sources of reproach against Irishmen. Now all this is quite natural. National feeling is a thing of very slow growth, for in societies organised on the clan system—an early stage of all societies—the mutual hostility of neighbouring communities, born of constant strife, is necessarily a far stronger feeling than dislike to strangers.

The same features of disunion of course presented themselves in Germany. The perpetuation of the constant discords among the Germans was the pious prayer of Tacitus: 'Maneat, quaeso, duretque gentibus, si non amor nostri, at certe odium sui: quando, urgentibus Imperii fatis, nihil jam praestare fortuna majus potest, quam hostium discordiam.'[1]

Another trait of the Gauls and Irish is said to be the *want of self-reliant courage and want of perception of the right time for waiting and striking*. Gibbon has given us a sketch of early German warfare, drawn up with ample knowledge of the facts and without the bias of ancestor-worship. 'Impatient of fatigue or delay, these half-armed warriors rushed to battle with dissonant shouts and disordered ranks, and sometimes by the effort of native valour prevailed over the constrained and more artificial bravery of the Roman mercenaries. But the Barbarians poured forth their whole souls on the first onset: they knew not how to rally or to retire. A repulse was sure defeat, and defeat was most commonly total destruction.'[2]

[1] *Germania*, 33.

[2] *Decline and Fall*, vol. i. p. 376.

It is sufficiently clear that, if Gauls and Irish were wanting in steady and sustained courage, so were the ancient Germans; and so must men ever be when they are imperfectly disciplined and have small confidence in their leaders. It must not be forgotten that those trained legionaries, whose patient valour was so strongly contrasted to German irresolution in difficulty and danger, were largely men of Celtic 'race,' Cisalpine and Transalpine Gauls. Some illustrations of this will presently appear.

In conclusion, there are three groups of propositions made by Mommsen, advancing certain defects as characteristic of the Gauls and other Celts :—

(*a*) Inability to form or tolerate any fixed *military* discipline.

(*b*) Habit of revolting under chance leaders.

(*c*) Inability to form or tolerate any fixed *political* discipline.

(*a*) The first of these, so far as the Gauls are concerned, need not detain us long. It may suffice to quote Niebuhr, who, in this matter at least, treats facts more respectfully than Herr Mommsen does.

Niebuhr tells us that after the Roman conquest of Gaul 'the Gaulish cavalry, which had the advantage of better horses and more complete armour, thenceforth constituted the flower of the Roman army, in which it had such a preponderance that the terms which belong to the cavalry service were almost all of them of Celtic origin; so paramount was Gallic influence on discipline.'[1]

[1] Niebuhr, *Lectures on Roman History*, vol. iii. p. 156.

That the democratic armies, or mobs rather, which attempted to oppose Cæsar in some places were without order or discipline does not and cannot prove that the Gauls were unfit for soldiers. They were composed mainly of untrained peasants; and necessarily so, as the regular soldiers were in Cæsar's service. Speaking of the Gauls, Ammianus Marcellinus, a military man of great experience, said: 'At all ages they are very fit for soldiering.'[1] That any warlike people should be unable to form or submit to any kind of military discipline would be a curious phenomenon, and all the more marvellous if exhibited by a nation of whose fighting powers Sallust wrote so highly[2]: 'Illique, et inde ad nostram memoriam, Romani sic habuere: alia omnia virtuti suae prona esse; cum Gallis pro salute non pro gloria certare.'

(*b*) The second proposition, touching tendency to revolt, and under chance leaders, may require more consideration. I have somewhat displaced it from its position in Herr Mommsen's sentence, in order to connect it more closely with one of the propositions contained in (*c*), viz.—that Celts were unable to tolerate any fixed form of political discipline. To revolt against tyranny is common to all humanity; it is only when a people has learned to oppose order of a legitimate kind, to be habitually insubordinate, that such a tendency can be considered characteristic, or a reproach, in any sense. Before Roman rule introduced good government into Gaul it is plain that the Gauls were generally subjected to a grinding tyranny. Cæsar says: 'None were

[1] Lib. xv. c. 11. [2] *Bellum Jug.* c. 114.

of any account except the military aristocracy and the Druids; the people were little better than slaves, and the country was filled with beggars and vagrants (*egentes et perditi*).' Under such conditions it is but natural that there should be frequent rebellions and disorders. The same conditions re-appeared in mediæval times among all the so-called races, and everywhere caused civil discords and rebellion whenever there seemed a chance of freedom.

That ill-government was the true cause of Gallic unrest is shown by the internal peace that followed the establishment of a rational law by the Romans. No country became more rapidly, more peacefully, or more completely Roman. Josephus describes the condition of Gaul as follows: 'Nay, if any had reason to rebel 'tis the Gauls whose country is by nature strong, being on the east side compassed by the Alps, on the north by the River of Rhine, on the south with the Pyrenean mountains, and on the west with the ocean. Notwithstanding having among them three hundred and five nations, and being as it were the fountain of plenty of all sorts of goods and commodities wherewith they enrich the whole world; yet do they pay tribute to the Romans, and account that their happiness depends on that of the Romans; and that does not arise from want of courage in them or in their ancestors, who four score years long fought for their liberty. They could not see without astonishment that the valour of the Romans was attended with such success that they gained more by fortune than they did by courage in all their wars. Yet now they obey a thousand two

hundred soldiers, having almost against every soldier a city.'[1]

The object Josephus had in view was to induce his countrymen to submit to the Romans, and he therefore laid stress on what was perhaps the only argument the Jews would be very ready to listen to. He represents the Gauls as submitting mainly because they recognised in Roman successes the overruling power of fate. However, more mundane motives are indicated. The Gauls are said to conclude that their happiness depends on that of the Romans, as it indeed very visibly did. The Romans secured them in the enjoyment of internal peace, by proclaiming the equality of all before the law, and so bringing to an end the evils of caste rule, and gave them external protection against the barbarians on the right bank of the Rhine. The *pax Romana* was in truth that 'stillness' for which Alfred longed so ardently in the distracted England of eight centuries afterwards.

There is no doubt the main facts were correctly stated by Josephus. The military force, except that employed in guarding the frontier against the Germans, was utterly insignificant; the country was very rich, and growing richer under Roman rule; and the people that so tamely submitted did not do so for want of courage: they were, and continued to be, brave and capable of making most excellent soldiers, as the Romans very well knew.

The common-sense conclusion from these facts is simple enough. Roman rule suited the Gauls. For five centuries the Gauls submitted faithfully, and practically

[1] Whiston's Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, bk. ii. c. 16.

voluntarily, to Roman government. Therefore we cannot say, so far as concerns the Gauls, that there is anything in the Celtic race or blood which made them mutinous. That they did not submit quietly to the capricious tyranny of a caste is merely an instance of the important truth that there is a great deal of human nature in mankind.

(*c*) It now remains to consider the proposition that the Gauls were unable to form any fixed political discipline. If this means that the Gauls did not form a great united nation, the fact is indisputable. On the other hand, to refer this fact to some incapacity in the Celtic nature is a mere assumption. The like failure befell every branch of the Aryan race save one. The Romans alone in the ancient world were able by their own unaided force to form a great and wide-extending dominion, and their success in this respect is a standing marvel in history. The world-rule of the single city of Rome, says Gregorovius,[1] will always remain the profoundest mystery of history, next to the rise and dominion of Christianity. Failure in a task where failure is all but universal cannot in justice be advanced to the discredit of any individual people. In the case of the Gauls, from the standpoint of the race theorist, there seems to be a special difficulty; because the only people that did succeed are supposed to be more nearly related to the Celts than to any other branch of the Aryan family—at least so we are told by some of the leading exponents of the so-called science of comparative philology.

[1] Vol. i. p. 6

To unite petty and hostile States, such as we find in the early history of every nation, into a great and harmonious whole is no easy task; and to the Gauls were opposed more than ordinary difficulties in effecting such a national union. The population was not homogeneous. There were three great divisions, having different languages, laws, and habits; and these three were not blended together, but were geographically as well as ethnologically distinct. When the Gauls had made some progress towards unity, by establishing considerable States, the Romans came on the scene. The people of Italy had an earlier start in civilisation assured to them by their position nearer to the original seats of commerce and culture; and to these Italians Gaul was a standing menace. Cicero said that since the foundation of the City all wise politicians held that the Gauls were the great danger to Rome. That the Romans would do everything in their power to ruin the rising hegemony of the Arverni was clearly a natural policy, and that they did so is a matter of fact. If in face of these difficulties the Gauls, with their necessarily imperfect civilisation, had established a strong political union, it would perhaps be useless to combat the race theory. For the 'Celts' would, in that case, appear a chosen race, and would most certainly be the dominant community in the civilised world.[1]

[1] The delusion that some particular nation is chosen or set apart to do the great work of civilisation, which in truth belongs to neither race nor nation, but is the task of all mankind, appears sadly prevalent among our German kinsmen. M. Jules Zeller quotes a speech of Herr von Giesebrecht as follows: 'La domination appartient à l'Allemagne parce qu'elle est une nation d'élite, une race noble, et qu'il lui convient par conséquent

Do facts, excepting this failure in forming a united Gaul, justify the assertion that the Gauls were incapable of forming any fixed political discipline? By no means: facts point to an opposite conclusion. The Gauls must have had ordered governments. The rich mercantile community of the Veneti, carrying on an extensive trade in large sailing ships for which the Roman fleet was no match, must have had an ordered government. From what Cæsar says about them, that government appears to have been a kind of aristocratic republic, a rude prototype very possibly of that long afterwards founded on the Adriatic by a people bearing the same name, and, if we may believe Strabo, of the same blood. One thing about them is certain—they formed a wealthy mercantile community, and order there must have been: commerce and wealth cannot co-exist with anarchy. The political discipline may be harsh and unjust, but there must be laws, and they must be obeyed; else trade, and a number of other things perhaps even more valuable, must vanish or fail to come into existence.

Again, the great hegemony of the Arverni, so rich and powerful that it could put vast armies into the field (in one battle against the Romans they are said to have lost 150,000 men), must have had an ordered government. So wealthy and powerful was the monarchy of the Arverni in the century before Cæsar's time that

d'agir sur ses voisins comme il est du droit et du devoir de tout homme doué de plus d'esprit, ou de plus de force, d'agir sur les individus moins bien doués ou plus faibles qui l'entourent.' With such ideas it is possible to make patriotic speeches or write pamphlets, but serious sober history is out of the question. (Zeller, *Origines de l'Allemagne*, Introduction, p. 31.)

the Romans condescended to treachery to destroy it. King Bituitus and his son were entrapped by Domitius, and sent to Rome to ornament a triumph; the monarchy was displaced, and some sort of republic set up in its stead by the Romans.

To the Arverni, thus destroyed by Rome, succeeded the Aedui, who for a time enjoyed a considerable share of power: they were intrigued against by the Romans of the province, and finally fell in the general conquest of Gaul by Cæsar.

To deny that the people who formed these powerful States, not to mention others by no means insignificant, had some power of political organisation seems a strange perversion of facts. The position will be maintained by no one who does not accept Herr Mommsen's sweeping dictum that the Celtic race is 'deficient in those deeper moral and political qualifications which lie at the root of all that is good and great in human development.'[1] Against this piece of Teutonic dogmatism I may quote the words of an Oxford scholar, whose special studies give him a far better right to speak of Celtic history than can be claimed for the German writer:—

'One of the lessons of this chapter is that the Gael, where he owned a fairly fertile country, as in the neighbourhood of the Tay, showed that he was not wanting in genius for political organisation, and the history of the kingdom of Kenneth MacAlpine and his descendants, warns one not to give ear to the spirit of race-weighing and race-damning criticism that jauntily discovers in

[1] *History of Rome*, vol. i. p. 334.

what it fancies the character of a nation the reason why it has not achieved results never fairly placed within its reach by the accident either of geography or history.'[1]

The bias of patriotism gives a strange colouring to facts, and one of the strangest effects, perhaps, it has ever produced is this habit of overpraising the Germans as lovers of liberty—'Their love of freedom was unconquerable.'[2]

This ineradicable love of freedom is not, as a matter of fact, well shown in German history. The free cities of the middle ages indeed presented striking examples of municipal liberty, but nowhere have emperors and kings been more powerful, or feudalism more firmly established. In no one part of Germany, at the close of the eighteenth century, was serfdom completely abolished, and in the greater part of Germany the people were still literally *adscripti glebae*, as in the middle ages.[3] The Germans endured the condition of *Leibeigenschaft* at a time when Italy, France, and England had been for centuries in the enjoyment of modern personal liberty. How can the ineradicable love of freedom of this 'race' be celebrated as a something far higher than that of Italians, among whom it is a subject of doubt as to the very existence of serfdom, or of Frenchmen, who won their personal liberty so long ago that the date is a moot point among antiquaries? England was by no means the first country in which serfdom was abolished.[4]

[1] Professor Rhys, *Celtic Britain*, p. 198, 1st ed.

[2] Mullinger, p. 21.

[3] Tocqueville, *France before the Revolution*, English translation, p. 27

[4] Cunningham, *Growth of English Commerce and Industry*, p. 201.

Fitzherbert, writing about the middle of the fifteenth century, laments over the continuance of villenage as a disgrace to this country; but tens of thousands of living Germans must have been born in that status, the existence of which was considered a scandal by the Englishman of four-and-a-half centuries ago.[1] 'For me semeth there shulde be no man bounde but to God and his Kinge.'[2]

The German patriot, to prove his case, refers to the revolt of Arminius. The Teutons, easily subjugated by Roman arms, rose in wild revolt against Roman civilisation, as eight centuries later the North Germans rose in wild revolt against the rude civilisation of the Frankish kingdom of Charlemagne. These revolts are supposed to prove Teutonic love of freedom. When a German grows eloquent in praise of the inextinguishable love of freedom of his ancestors, he has considerable historical difficulties to meet in proving his thesis. In Germany the great mass of the community was subjected for ages to a fierce tyranny, which led to the equally fierce revolts of the Bundschuh, and which continued to grind and oppress the peasantry down almost to our own days.

[1] Dates of abolition of serfdom in German States during the present century (Tocqueville, p. 352):—Hohenzollern, Schleswig and Holstein, 1804; Nassau, 1808. The modern form of *Erbunterthänigkeit*, or 'hereditary serfdom,' existed in parts of Russia till 1809; Bavarian serfdom, 1808. Napoleon abolished serfdom by decree in several small States, of Berg, Erfurth, Baireuth, &c., 1808; Westphalia, 1808 and 1809; Lippe-Detmold, 1809; Schaumburg-Lippe, 1810; Swedish Pomerania, 1810; Hesse-Darmstadt, 1809 and 1810; Würtemberg, 1817; Mecklenburg, 1820; Oldenburg, 1814; Saxony, 1832; Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, 1833. *Erbunterthänigkeit* continued in Austria till 1811.

[2] Cunningham, p. 434.

Teutonic liberty had but a short history anywhere, even in England while England was under purely Teutonic institutions.

The law of Athelstan, 'that any man who had no lord may be slain as a thief,' shows that freedom was dead and buried in Saxon times.[1] Again, he is no true lover of freedom who grovels under the rule of a caste, yet so early was submission to aristocratic rule manifested, and so long did it continue among Germanic nations, that Mr. Blackwall (no mean authority on northern antiquities) considers 'an aristocratic feeling as one of the inherent psychological traits of the Teutonic race.'[2]

This is not the place to consider in any detail the alleged inherent love of freedom of the Teutonic race; all that concerns us here is the 'habit of revolt' by which it was manifested, and which is advanced in its proof. The revolts may be highly creditable to the Germans, and Gallic submission to Roman rule may be a blot on the character of the Gauls; but the fact remains that the early Germans were more prone to rebellion than the Gauls.

Whether we choose to account for German rejection of civilisation by attributing to early Teutons the virtues of the Golden Age, or adopt the more prosaic though perhaps more reasonable method of explaining that rejection, by the fact of the universal distaste savages exhibit for the restraints of orderly life — adopting either explanation, the fact remains: that Roman rule

[1] Pike, *History of Crime in England*, vol. i p. 442.
[2] Mallet, *Northern Antiquities*, p. 367.

was unfit for the Germans, and that they were unfit for Roman rule, or indeed any rule whatever, for they would neither submit to civilised law nor pay taxes.

The Germans remained without national union or organisation for a very long period of their history ; German culture was manifestly far lower than Gallic, so it is absurd to imagine that the advances towards political organisation effected in Gaul were contemporaneously possible in Germany. The revolt of Arminius, or rather the policy adopted by Rome after that event—a policy of forming and maintaining a scientific frontier, and no longer attempting the conquest of a poor country inhabited by apparently untameable savages—condemned Germany to unprogressiveness ; the old low stage of culture was maintained, and as a consequence the old confusion and lawlessness continued. Three centuries separate the age of Tacitus from that period known as the age of the barbaric invasions, and during that long period the Germans had made no advance, morally or politically.[1]

In the end civilisation drove a Sibyl's bargain with the unfortunate North Germans. Under the guidance of Arminius they had rejected Roman culture in its heyday ; nine centuries afterwards they had to pay as high, or even a higher price, for such paltry remnants as survived in the Kingdom of Charlemagne.

Only one point of Herr Mommsen's parallel now remains—

*The Gallic and Irish tendency to rise in revolt under*

[1] Fustel de Coulanges, *op. cit.* p. 305.

*chance leaders.* In so great an historian as Herr Mommsen this assertion must be considered as a kind of Homeric doze.

The leaders of popular revolts are almost necessarily chance leaders. Wat Tyler, Jack Cade, Robert Kett in England; the apostle of the Bundschuh movement, Hans Bohein the drummer; its leaders, Joss Fritz, little Jack Rohrbach, Götz von Berlichingen, and the rest of them in Germany, were all emphatically chance leaders: all the early German leaders owed their position in a great degree to chance. Ariovistus was the war-king of some petty tribe; he gained a footing in Gaul as a mercenary in the employment of the Sequani, and soon found himself at the head of a national migration. Civilis and Arminius owe their names to their skill, and their position as leaders to the accident that gave them a Roman education. Marobod, the founder of the most powerful war kingdom of Germany, overthrown by the intrigues and military skill of Arminius, gained what political insight and tactical knowledge he possessed during a long residence in the Roman Empire. On the other hand, Vincingetorix, Amborix, Correus and the other distinguished Gallic leaders were genuine products of Gaul, and as chieftains and kings were the natural leaders of their people.

It is impossible to consider fully here the charges brought against the Irish character in this last group of characteristic failings; to do so would require an examination of the leading facts of Irish history. For illustration, we may accept for the moment Herr Mommsen's notion of the political aptitudes of Irishmen: let him

consider the Irishman as a mutinous barbarian, incapable of forming a sound political judgment, or of submitting to rational government; then this pleasing picture will afford a pretty accurate likeness of the primitive Germans. One point, however, is easily met. It is an obvious mistake to represent Irishmen as unfit to submit to military discipline; the history of their service in the French, Spanish and Austrian armies, to say nothing of their eminence in the English army, affords sufficient evidence that Irishmen make quite as good soldiers as any others.

I have now attempted to examine, perhaps at too great length, the famous parallel between the Irish and the Gauls made by the most celebrated of living German historians. The authority of the writer, and the importance of such parallels in educating the popular mind up to faith in the race theory, must plead an excuse for the wearisome task.

The different characteristics assigned by our author to the Gauls and Irish turn out, as I have endeavoured to show, to be either common to all humanity, or even more especially characteristic of the primitive Germans, as described by the classical writers, than of the Gauls. Nor need such a conclusion startle us; for these simple reasons, that the Germans were for long less civilised than the Gauls, and that the traits we are accustomed to recognise as marking the Irish are merely the caricatured lineaments of Irish peasants, sketched by Irish humourists or foreign satirists. The peasant class is everywhere the most unprogressive order of society; and the Irish peasant was thus a member of the most

unprogressive class in a but slowly progressive country. Political, social, geographical, and physical causes have, until very recently at least, made Ireland one of the most unprogressive of Aryan countries. Therefore the characteristics assigned to the Irish peasant, so far as they were in any way true, tend to produce a representation of the primitive Aryan ; and it is quite certain that the early Germans were primitive Aryans, nothing more and nothing less.

I would therefore conclude by suggesting that the passage from Herr Mommsen's history might be slightly altered, and should read as follows :—

'In the accounts of the ancients as to the *Teutons* of the Elbe and the Main, we find almost every one of the characteristic traits we are accustomed to recognise as marking the Irish. Every feature re-appears.'

In fact an examination of Herr Mommsen's parallel between the ancient Gauls and the modern Irish shows pretty clearly that a closer parallel may be drawn between the Irish and the Teutons. This need afford no surprise to any one who, in Gibbon's words, 'condescends to reflect that similar manners will be produced by similar situations.'

## ESSAY VI.

# SAXON AND CELT.

### ARE THERE DISTINCT ENGLISH AND IRISH RACES?

## ARE THERE DISTINCT ENGLISH AND IRISH RACES?

I WISH next to state some opinions that, according to the merely popular idea of the present day, might be set down as historic heresies. I cannot believe in the existence of any well-defined race either in England or Ireland; and hence, if there be no distinct races, their differences must arise from other than racial causes.

The 'English race' is a phrase so much in use in speaking and writing that few stop to inquire what it is, or whether such a thing really exists. It is assumed, like the well-known question of Charles II. to the Royal Society about a fish in water. In the earliest known days there is every reason to believe that the ancient Britons were a tribe of the Gauls or Celts, and there is no reason to suppose that these primitive Britons were exterminated by the Anglo-Saxons. On the contrary, it has been maintained by the most competent anthropologists, from the days of Phillips to those of Huxley, that both Britons and Anglo-Saxons remained as joint components of the nation, and that such a mixture continues to exist, gradually blending and expanding. Gibbon also rejects 'the conventional supposition that the Saxons of Britain remained alone in the desert which they had subdued. After the sanguinary barbarians

had secured their dominion and gratified their revenge it was their interest to preserve the peasants as well as the cattle of the unresisting country. In each successive revolution the patient herd becomes the property of the new masters; and the salutary compact of food and labour is silently ratified by their mutual necessities.'[1]

In fact, the mass of the original population remained; the lordship or ruling power was alone transferred. There is no solid reason for supposing that the German conquerors acted in Britain in a way widely different from that which they had followed on the conquest of continental Roman provinces. They did not annihilate the natives.

Nor can the Roman invasion have been without a sensible effect on the population. Their occupation lasted about 500 years, and from the time of Vespasian the island, being thoroughly subdued, remained at peace, inhabitants and conquerors living on amicable terms. Large camps were established throughout England, and London became a not inconsiderable Roman colony; hence it may be assumed that there was some infusion of Roman blood, not to be neglected in considering the race.

But the most powerful and permanent effect was that produced by the Norman Conquest. That new strain was both dominating in influence and great in numbers. It is only necessary to refer to a matter that is so familiar and obvious, without discussing it.

The circumstances of England have, since then, steadily tended to increase the variety of the com-

[1] *Decline and Fall*, cap. 38.

ponents of its inhabitants. Its ever growing commerce, its natural intercourse by sea with other nations, the attractions of its comparative prosperity for settlers from all parts, and largely from Ireland, were influences that have been acting continuously, so that now at least there is no strain of nationality with which English blood has not been inoculated.

The result of these various changes has been a mixed race of Celtic, Scandinavian, Saxon, and French elements, in proportion varying in different districts in England, as is also the case in Ireland. Cross England from Yarmouth to Cardigan Bay. You start among a people whose Scandinavian origin is still traceable in the local dialect and names of places; you then cross a country in which the Anglo-Saxon race is dominant, and finally reach the opposite sea among a Celtic population.

Without entirely agreeing with Defoe, there is much truth in his couplet—

> A true Englishman 's a contradiction,
> In speech an irony, in fact a fiction.

For in England we find a people whose unity is the result of historic causes, not of identity of race.

But it may be thought that changes in the national characteristics, which we admit have occurred in the case of the more variable and unstable foreigners, did not occur with us, and that we have inherited from men of old our steady, sturdy, English character, and that it at least has remained unaltered since our ancestors landed with Hengist and Horsa.

If any credence is to be given to the accounts of the manners, habits and customs of the English people, they too have changed like all the rest of the world. Let us take a few instances.

A certain steadiness of mind and dislike of levity is assumed to be now a characteristic of Englishmen, probably with as much justice as is to be found in such portrait-painting. The very opposite was thought of mediæval Englishmen. Pope Eugenius IV. was a learned and able man, with great strength of will, rather obstinate, according to his enemy Aeneas Sylvius—'ubi sententiam imbuit, non facile mutari potuit.' Such a man would value in others the quality of firmness on which he prided himself, and its absence in others would be noted with contempt. 'Englishmen,' he said, 'were fit for anything and to be preferred before other nations, were it not for their wavering and unsettled lightness.'[1] This was in the fifteenth century; in the next century Dr. Andrew Borde gives a similar account of his countrymen.

This unsettled lightness, also shown in matters of dress, is attributed by honest old Camden, according to the planetary theory of character common in his time, to Englishmen 'being, like all islanders, Lunaries or Moon's men.'[2] The merry England of the olden time, 'Anglia plena jocis, gens libera et apta jocari,' was not so wise as the England of to-day; at least, it certainly had not the reputation of much wisdom.

The idleness of the English is the subject of many

[1] Camden, *Remains concerning Britain*, p. 19, ed. 1870.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 220.

complaints. In Starkey's 'England in the Reign of Henry VIII.' Pole says: 'For thys is a certayn truth, that the pepul of England is more given to idul glotony than any pepul of the world; wych is, to all them that have experyence of the mannerys of others, manyfest and playn.'[1]

Englishmen now justly pride themselves on simplicity in dress and language, and on scrupulous personal cleanliness. The English of the past were noted for exactly the opposite qualities. The love of gaudy finery was very strong in both sexes among the Anglo-Saxons; and it was only after hard and long continued struggles that saints and councils were able to compel even the clergy to adopt a more sober and less barbaric style of dress.[2] Combined with a love of finery, there was in mediæval England a singular disregard for personal cleanliness. 'Every writer,' says Professor Rogers, 'during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries who makes his comments on the customs and practices of English life adverts to the profuseness of their diet, and the extraordinary uncleanliness of their habits and their persons.'[3] In this relation we may recall Addison's banter in making his wealthy London citizen think it worth while to record in his journal, as an event, the couple of times a week on which he had chanced to wash his face. With love of finery and dirt, the English were remarked for pomposity of language. 'Graeci involute, Romani splendide, Angli pompatice, dictare solent.'

[1] Early English Text Society. P. 87.
[2] Green, *Making of England*, p. 184, and note.
[3] *Labour and Wages*, p. 336.

A far darker shade hung over mediæval Englishmen, as well as their contemporaries in other countries. The England of to-day is, on the whole, so orderly; crimes of violence, above all assassination, are so repugnant to popular feelings, that it fortunately requires an effort to realise to ourselves that 'England was once considered almost as a land of assassins.'[1] Englishmen should bring home to their minds the truth contained in these words of Mr. Pike: 'Nor when the Englishman remembers the deeds which his forefathers did, not only before the Norman Conquest but long after, has he any reason for the Pharisaical belief that his nature is not as the nature of an Irishman.'

Is it from the lofty excellences supposed to be mysteriously transmitted through descent that the nation has attained its present greatness? What Englishmen have to congratulate themselves upon is, not that they inherit many excellent qualities from such ancestors or from ruder forefathers, but that they have gradually risen to be the Englishmen of this nineteenth century, living under a polity formed by influences as mixed as their race. There can be no doubt historically that they are a very mixed people; were they not so they would be completely unfitted for the world-influence they exercise. Sir John Fortescue hit a true note when he signalised the blending of laws and customs brought about by different invaders and incomers as the real glory of English law. Were they in truth merely tribal, or a development from tribal,

[1] Pike, *History of Crime in England*, vol. i. p. 62.

they would lack the quality of universality which is their ever-growing characteristic.

English history is better known than Irish. Hence some great facts in it are incontrovertible, and a few inferences may be allowed as possible or permissible; but, in a vague way, every thing and person in Ireland is set down as necessarily Irish, and therefore as quite distinct from English. But the fact is that the elements in Ireland are far more mixed, besides being largely composed of English materials. In 1612 Sir John Davies said, 'If the people were numbered this day by the poll, such as are descended of English race would be found more in number than the ancient natives.'[1] Since his time we know how largely the English element has been recruited. This fact of the mixture of races in Ireland is not popular. The Celtic race theory is acceptable alike to the Irish patriot and to the English apologist for English rule; the former loves to point to the virtues and glory of the ancient Celts, who were brave, noble, and free, cultivators of eloquence, poetry, and literature, and pre-eminent for piety. On the other side, it is almost as easy for the hostile critic to show that they were irreclaimable barbarians, treacherous and silly; but endowed, according to Mr. Froude, with that strange and dangerous power of fascination, 'by which they assimilate to their own image those who venture among them.'

What was the very early population of Ireland is not well known, nor is it now important; but it was derived from varied sources—from Britain and Western

[1] *Discovery*, p. 6.

Europe, some from Spain and from Phœnician traders; many from the more Teutonic Scoti, who were both invaders and inhabitants; and from the Vikings and Danes.[1] But from the time of the Anglo-Norman Conquest the colonising operations from England were frequent and undoubted. Large grants were made by King Henry to the many Norman adventurers who flocked over to expel the native occupants; and afterwards, from the reign of Queen Mary for two centuries, the vigorous policy was pursued of exterminating the natives, and importing settlers from England. Two large districts, Offaly and Leix, were changed into shire lands as the King's and Queen's counties, and given over to English colonists, but not completely; so that the original Irish were not got rid of till late in Queen Elizabeth's reign, and then by such deeds as the ruthless massacre of Mullaghmast.[2]

'In a few generations the old inhabitants had been exterminated; tracts once woods and morasses were reclaimed and cultivated; the fastnesses of the chiefs and the cabins of the tribe were succeeded by the castles of English gentlemen and the farmsteads of English yeomen.'

Elizabeth's wars left Munster a wilderness; so desolate was it that 'not the lowing of a cow or the sound of a ploughboy's whistle was to be heard from Valentia to the Rock of Cashel.'[3]

War, pestilence, and famine had done their work, and there was room for another great settlement. By

[1] C. G. Walpole, p. 2. [2] Richey, 2nd series, pp. 256, 260.
[3] Froude, *English in Ireland*, vol. i. p. 60.

the great plantation of Munster 574,682 acres were forfeited to the Crown. This land was granted to 'undertakers' in estates of 12,000, 8,000, 6,000, and 4,000 acres. Each undertaker of 12,000 acres was bound to plant eighty-six families. This scheme was too vast to be carried out, in its entirety at least, without a greater outlay of money than suited most of the undertakers. Companies of planters, however, came from Devonshire, Dorsetshire, Somerset, Lancashire, and Cheshire.[1] One of the principal undertakers, Richard Boyle, Earl of Cork, notably succeeded in the plantation of his enormous estates. When Cromwell saw the great improvement effected by Boyle, he said: 'If there had been an Earl of Cork in every province, it would have been impossible for the Irish to have raised a rebellion.' The Earl of Cork's settlements deserve attention, as the presence of so many English and Protestants in Munster became subsequently a matter of considerable political importance.[2]

From the reign of Elizabeth, it may be well to note, the Irish question underwent a change caused by the Reformation. In the old days the English politician divided the Irish into the King's enemies, the King's English rebels, and the King's English subjects. From thenceforward the division was simply one of religion, Papist and Protestant. Formerly the object was to make or keep the natives 'English,' now it was to make or keep them Protestants. As formerly an Englishman became 'Irish' by adopting the language, laws or

[1] Prendergast, *Cromwellian Settlement*, Introduction, p. 66.
[2] Richey, p. 388.

dress of the Celts, so now he became 'mere Irish' by adopting or retaining the ancient faith.

The next great settlement in Ireland was the plantation of Ulster by James I. Chichester's first scheme was to plant Ulster with a mixed population, giving its present inhabitants as much land as they could stock and cultivate, and parcelling out the remainder among the servants of the Crown, civil and military, and among colonists from England and Scotland.[1]

This plantation was more effectively carried out than the preceding ones: portions were arbitrarily selected by the Commissioners for such Irish as it was inconvenient to transplant, and the remainder of the six counties were divided among Scotch and English settlers. Other plantations were also made in Leitrim, Longford, King's County and Wexford.[2]

The Catholic Rebellion of 1641 does not concern my purpose. It and the disputed massacre of Protestants have been the subject of acrimonious controversy and reckless statements on both sides. Mr. Lecky in his History of England sifts the evidence, and ably exposes Mr. Froude's numerous errors.

The war extended over the whole of Ireland; both English loyalist and Irish rebel lay at Cromwell's feet. According to Sir W. Petty, out of a population of 1,466,000, 616,000 perished in the course of eleven years by the sword, by plague, or by famine caused by wanton destruction of crops.[3] Of the number destroyed,

[1] Gardiner, *History of England*, vol. i. p. 418.
[2] Prendergast, *Cromwellian Settlement*, Introduction, p. 72.
[3] Lecky, vol. ii. p. 112.

Petty states that 504,000 were of Irish, and 112,000 of English, extraction; he says that other estimates were much greater. A horrible sign of desolation may be noted, the increase in the number of wolves. Even within nine miles north of Dublin, in the plain district, lands were leased in 1653 on the condition of keeping wolf-dogs, wolves' heads to be received as rent.[1] After the war 30,000 or 40,000 Irish soldiers availed themselves of the permission to enlist in foreign services, and thus a large emigration took place.

Now came the great Cromwellian settlement. Innocent Papists, *i.e.*, those who had taken no overt part in the war, were assigned portions of land in Connaught, and forced to transplant themselves, their families, servants and dependents. A sufficient number of ploughmen and labourers were chosen and allowed to remain, but all the rest should either seek a home in Connaught or cross the sea. So thoroughly was the work of transplanting done in some places, that we find no one remained in Tipperary who could point out the boundaries in one of the baronies; so that 'four fitt and knowing persons of the Irish nation' had to be selected from among the transplanted in Connaught to perform that duty.[2]

According to Petty, before 1641 about two thirds of the soil of Ireland had belonged to the Papists, or Irish, as they were now commonly called. After the Act of Settlement the position was changed, the Protestants now owning rather more than two thirds.

[1] Prendergast, *Cromwellian Settlement*, p. 153.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 79, note.

Another writer, Colonel Laurence, a Cromwellian officer, says that before the Rebellion the Irish owned ten acres to every one owned by an Englishman, but that after the settlement the English possessed four fifths of Ireland. A large number of the transplanted persons—perhaps, as Mr. Prendergast says, the greater number—were of old English families from the Pale and other portions of Ireland; to these were added many of the Elizabethan settlers, and thus a crowd of proprietors, leaseholders, farmers and their workpeople, of English descent, found themselves permanently established in Connaught, Sligo, and Leitrim. Along with them were planted the disbanded soldiers, and from both these sources Connaught received a considerable admixture of English blood; while the rest of Ireland was filled with a new race of English gentlemen and yeomen.

Of the Catholics who recovered their estates after the Restoration, the greater part finally lost them again by supporting the cause of James II., and many Protestants shared their ruin. Thus many of English origin nearly disappeared as proprietors; and, either leaving the country, or more generally sinking down to a lower rank, they brought another infusion of English blood among the Irish peasantry. It is hardly necessary to allude to the numerous smaller settlements made from time to time, such as the 800 Protestant families of Palatine Germans planted in 1709, chiefly in Limerick and Kerry; they were peasants, and their descendants soon became indistinguishable from the mixed races about them. A larger or at least more

influential body of foreigners were the French Huguenots and refugees. Neither should the continued importation of English and Scotch farmers, down to recent times, be forgotten.

Thus for centuries has this double action been at work. The old population at the time of the Conquest has been systematically diminished by war, massacre, starvation, and banishment. New settlers have constantly and steadily been brought in and substituted for the natives. This process might in time have wholly replaced the old by the new, like Locke's example of mending woollen socks with silk till there was no wool remaining. But this did not happen ; the planters were gradually absorbed by the Irish. The soldiers intermarried with the young Irish girls. The natives were taken as servants by English masters ; the settlers succumbed to human influences.[1] Forty years after the Cromwellian settlement, numbers of the children of Cromwell's soldiers were unable to speak a word of English. Though the land changed hands, as in Elizabeth's and James's time, it was again found impossible to expel a nation root and branch. Thus there was not complete extermination, but there was an almost complete mixture of both races. Hence the inhabitants are now descended from nationalities inextricably blended.

'What, then,' says Professor Huxley, 'is the value of the ethnological difference between Englishmen of the western half of England and Irishmen of the eastern half of Ireland ? For what reason does one

[1] C. G. Walpole, *History of Ireland*, p. 280.

deserve the name of a "Celt," and not the other? And, further, if we turn to the inhabitants of the western half of Ireland, why should the term "Celts" be applied to them more than to the inhabitants of Cornwall? And if the name is applicable to the one as justly as the other, why should not intelligence, perseverance, thrift, industry, sobriety, respect for law be admitted to be Celtic virtues? And why should we not seek for the cause of their absence in something else than the idle pretext of "Celtic blood"?'

Differences of present condition are sufficiently accounted for by long-continued differences of environment; local position, convenience or remoteness, climate and soil, social influences, legislation and administration of the law, political history, and religion or its absence—these are true and sufficient causes, and there is no reason for imagining any other.

# ESSAY VII.

# CHINA.

## ITS PHILOSOPHY, NOT RACE, ARRESTED ITS PROGRESS.

## CHINESE SYSTEMS.

CHINA, while the Republic of Rome was engaged in its first struggle with Carthage, set about remodelling her ancient constitution. 'Good government is impossible under a multiplicity of masters,' said the Emperor Che-Hwang-te; so he undertook the destruction of the feudal system, and chose capable men as governors and sub-governors of provinces and districts.[1] Thus in China the rule of status ended, and the rule of contract began. The system established by this monarch more than twenty-one centuries ago still exists in China, though afterwards modified by a great change in the mode of selecting officials effected under the Tang dynasty (A.D. 618-905).[2] This was the establishment of competitive examinations as a mode of securing the most intelligent men to fill official posts. Thus those unprogressive Chinese founded about twelve centuries ago a system of filling appointments which progressive Englishmen only adopted in our own day, and the partial introduction of which was hailed as a novel and capital improvement.

The classical writers amused themselves with dreams

[1] Boulger, *History of China*, vol. i. p. 70.
[2] P. Lafitte, *Civilisation Chinoise.*

of a golden age of old, when the kings and rulers of men were philosophers.[1] This condition has been partially realised in China for twelve hundred years; for, since the age of the Tang dynasty, the government of the country has been carried on by men trained in philosophy as understood in that ancient empire. China is the only country in which this experiment has been tried so long, and on so vast a scale. It is therefore most interesting to examine what effects the system has produced as to social freedom and material progress.

We, outer barbarians, are pretty well acquainted with the names at least of three of the great philosophers of China: Lao-tse, about B.C. 600; his rival Confucius, about B.C. 551; and Mencius, born about B.C. 371. These three are the masters whose opinions it has been the work of subsequent sages to explain and extend. They taught a politico-ethical system which was profoundly pagan, inasmuch as it concerned itself mainly with moral well-being in this world, and took but scanty notice of a future life; and they despised physical science, as tending to distract attention from the really important question, 'What ought I do?' As Socrates taught that Science, if pursued as an end, led men to neglect the Gods; so the Chinese considered that scientific curiosity prevented men from keeping steadily in view the all-important questions of social relations. The attention of the philosophers of China was thus mainly directed to the most unprogressive branch of human knowledge; for, though Buckle's opinion that morals

[1] Seneca, *Epistolae ad Lucilium*, ep. 90.

have little influence on the progress of civilisation is very questionable, his assertion that all the great dogmas of which moral systems are composed have been known for thousands of years can hardly be disputed.[1]

Self-abnegation was the cardinal rule of Lao-tse. The bleakest moral height to which unselfishness can soar is perhaps contained in the teaching, *Ama nesciri*, 'Seek to be unknown'; and this was the doctrine of Lao-tse, preached twenty-five centuries ago.[2] 'The wise man ought to renounce glory, honours, all ambition, and live simply and unknown.'[3]

'Man should be like a child. He ought to free himself from the narrow world of his own intelligence and repose in Lao alone. For he who holds fast to his own views cannot be enlightened. He should cultivate interior calm. The virtuous man free from passions ought not to keep any view before him; he ought to be content with his lot, but advance with a constant fear of failing. He ought to deny himself, to govern his body and his appetites. His body ought to weigh upon him as an unfortunate incumbrance. The other particular virtues are humility and simplicity, moderation, purity, justice, kindness, generosity, beneficence, gentleness, clemency, the absence of all particular and personal affection, economy, the instruction of others, efforts to make others better. All these are prescribed alike, but these last ought to be done by example and not by argument.

[1] *History of Civilisation*, vol. i. p. 180. Douglas, *Confucianism*, p. 193.

[2] Professor De Harlez, *Dublin Review*, July 1886.

[3] 'Nec vixit male, qui natus moriensque fefellit.' (Hor. *Ep.* i. 17.)

Even if a man knows himself to be strong, enlightened, and celebrated, he ought to act as though he were weak, ignorant, obscure, and never seek to gain authority. He ought to be beneficent without seeking his own interest, charitable without considering those upon whom he lavishes his alms, and who are under an obligation to him. In doing good he ought not to favour any, but do good for its own sake. He should pay back injuries by benefits. Begin difficult labours by doing what is easier. A saint does not seek difficult tasks, merely because he knows how to accomplish them.'[1]

Such were the counsels of perfection according to Lao-tse. The standard was too high for Confucius. We are told that, after a conference with his venerable rival, Confucius retired discomfited, and said to his disciples: 'I know how birds can fly, how fishes can swim, and how beasts can run. The runner however may be snared, the swimmer may be hooked, and the flyer may be shot with an arrow. But there is the dragon; I cannot tell how he mounts on the wind through the clouds, and rises to heaven. To-day I have seen Lao-tse, and can only compare him to the dragon.'[2]

Confucius did not require his 'superior man' to share in the dragon-flight of Lao-tse; still his standard of moral excellence was high, though by no means impossible of attainment.[3] 'The superior man' was to lead a life of active beneficence; he was to be righteous in all his ways; his acts guided by the laws of propriety and marked by strict sincerity; he was to be careless of

[1] De Harlez, *Dublin Review*, July 1886.
[2] Douglas, *Confucianism*, p. 177.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 88.

wealth, and unceasing in his efforts to set a good example to others.

As a moralist Confucius must always rank high among the teachers of mankind. Five hundred years before Christ he taught—though in the negative form, it is true—that most unshaken rule of morality and foundation of all social virtue: 'All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.' Confucius said, 'What you do *not* want done to yourself, do *not* do to others.'[1] There was a certain degree of pharisaism in Confucius which was absent in Lao-tse: he would have the outside of the platter cleansed; he would have every rite and ceremony, whether at court, in official life, or within the family circle, scrupulously observed, down to the number of meals to be eaten, and the posture to be assumed in bed. But though Confucius insisted more on exterior observances than Lao-tse, to whom interior discipline was everything, there is no great difference between their systems of ethics considered as practical rules of conduct.[2]

Mencius did not attempt to formulate a new system; he simply restated the principles of his master, Confucius, with bolder and more subtle arguments, and such has been the task of succeeding scholars.[3]

[1] Douglas, *Confucianism*, p. 143. Lao-tse also taught that the wise man should return good for evil; but the morality of Confucius, lofty as it was, stopped short at reciprocity. One of his pupils having asked his views concerning the principle that injury should be recompensed with kindness, the philosopher answered, 'With what, then, do you recompense kindness? Recompense injury with justice; and recompense kindness with kindness.' (*Ibid.* p. 144.)

[2] *Ibid.* p. 195.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 155.

The Chinese ethico-political philosophy is extremely ancient; it is practically stationary, but it is held to be perfect and sufficient for all the higher needs of mankind. The effect of placing the government of a country in the hands of men trained in such a system, as has been done in China for nearly twelve hundred years, must be hostile to what we know as progress. In this relation it is worth while to quote the words of a living Chinese statesman, as showing how differently an imperial official regards many things, on the possession of which we are accustomed to pride ourselves.

Lin-Ta-jen was sent to England in 1876, and certain portions of his official report, printed as usual at Pekin for circulation among the high officials of the empire, were translated by Mr. F. I. A. Bourne, and appeared in the 'Nineteenth Century' for October 1880. From that translation I take the following extracts:—

'This mechanical contrivance is what the English call true knowledge; and in their view our holy doctrine (Confucianism) is mere empty and useless talk. Lest educated Chinese should be deceived into this opinion I beg to offer the following explanation: Well, this true knowledge of theirs simply consists in various feats of deft manipulation—knowledge that can turn out a machine and nothing more. Is not this what Tzŭ Husia means when he says, "Something may be learnt by inquiry into the most insignificant doctrine (lit., 'road'), but the wise man will not follow it far, lest he find himself in the mire of its follies and absurdities"? The doctrine handed down from our holy men of old may be summed up in two words, humanity and justice.

. . . All creatures that live and breathe under heaven have ears and eyes, claws and teeth, and each endeavours to obtain for itself as much as possible to eat and drink, and to carry off more than its fellows; man alone is able to set a bound to his greed. Man can claim to be considered superior to the beast only because he has a distinct conception of time and of duty, because he knows of virtue and abstract right, and can see that material strength and self-advantage are not everything. At present the nations of Europe think it praiseworthy to relieve the poor and to help the distressed, and are therefore humane *in this one respect*; they think it important to be fair and truthful, and are therefore just *in this one respect.* If Europeans in truth understood the duties resulting from the five relationships,[1] then we should discern the effect in their lives . . . peace and order would reign supreme; there would be no unrestrained rivalry or angry greed, making use of deadly weapons to bring destruction on mankind. But do we see these results in Western countries? No, indeed, their whole energy is centred in the manufacture of different kinds of machines; steam vessels and locomotives to bring rapid returns of profits, guns and rifles to slay their fellow-men. They rival one another in greed and in cunning methods of acquiring wealth; they say they are rich and mighty, and put all down to their *true knowledge*, forsooth! . . . Property is wealth to the foreigner; moderation in his desires to the Chinese. Material power is might to the foreigner, to live and let

[1] The five relationships are: Prince and minister, father and son, elder brother and younger brother, husband and wife, friend and friend.

live is might to the Chinese. But the heaping up of words will not explain these principles. China forbids strange devices (machinery) in order to prevent confusion; she encourages humanity and justice as the very foundations of good government, and this will be her policy for ever. Yet foreigners say that such principles are profitless. Profitless, indeed! Profitable rather beyond expression!'

Though these words came to us from a far-distant land, and their spirit from a far-off time, they are by no means strange to our ears; they find echoes among men of our own country whose training has not been dissimilar to that of His Excellency Lin. But such opinions are not held by our rulers, for we are not governed by *literati* like the Chinese, but, for the most part, by practical men, who hold the modern creed which tells every man to look after his cash-box.[1]

Carlyle, like the Chinese philosophers, thought that machinery or 'strange devices' led to 'confusion.' 'The huge demon of mechanism smokes and thunders, panting at his great task, in all sections of English land; changing his shape like a very Proteus, and infallibly at every change of shape oversetting whole multitudes of workmen; and, as if by the waving of his shadow from afar, hurling these asunder, this way and that, in their crowded march and course of trade and traffic, so that the wisest no longer knows his whereabout.'[2]

Mr. Frederic Harrison is equally emphatic :—

[1] Froude, *On Progress. Short Studies*, vol. ii. p. 339.
[2] *Chartism. Collected Works*, vol. x. p. 352.

'Our present type of society is, in many respects, one of the most horrible that has ever existed in the world's history—boundless luxury and self-indulgence at one end of the scale, and at the other a condition of life as cruel as that of a Roman slave, and more degraded than that of a South Sea Islander.' It may be said that there is no necessary connection between great mechanical improvements and these social diseases and horrors. No *necessary* connection, perhaps, but there is a plain historical connection. Fling upon a people at random a mass of mechanical appliances which invite and force them to transform their whole external existence, to turn home work into factory work, hand-work into machine-work, man's work into child's work, country life into town life; to have movement, mass, concentration, competition where quiet individual industry had been the habit for twenty generations, and these results follow. Wherever the great steam system, factory system, unlimited coal, iron, gas, and railway systems have claimed a district for their own, there these things are. The Black country and the Coal country, the Cotton country, the central cities, the great ports seem to grow these things as certainly as they turn their streams into sewers, and their atmosphere into smoke and fog.

Carlyle would have smashed the steam-engines into fragments. Ruskin counsels the destruction of factories, and stormily denounces railways and the other abominations which make modern life so unpicturesque. Most of our writers urge similar though more moderate views; still the steam whistle deafens us, and we are choked by

factory smoke all the same, in spite of what our *literati* may say. When the philosopher tells the man of day-book and ledger that our present civilisation is in many respects one of the most horrible the world has ever seen, the sole effect produced on the latter is a strong conviction that philosophers are utterly unfit to deal with the practical affairs of life. This contempt for abstract views accounts for the exclusion of the aristocracy of intellect from the administration of highly progressive countries. Every popular assembly in such countries—as, for example, notably the British House of Commons—shows a decided dislike to 'theorists,' and a well-marked impatience of their teachings. I have before me as I write a bitter complaint from one of the leading organs of the scientific classes in England [1] on the exclusion of the representatives of culture from the jubilee gathering of the notables of the nation. It seems to me that, if the writer of that article were able to place himself mentally in the position of the great body of our traders and practical men, he would see that in a State parade of the ruling classes of England the leaders of culture, as such, would be quite out of place. If there were a similar assembly in China, the *literati* of the ancient Academy of Han-Lin would, as a matter of course, hold the highest place, for they form a supremely important body in the government of the empire. In England, on the other hand, the Royal Society and kindred bodies were left out, simply because they possess no recognised function in the administration of public affairs.

[1] *Nature*, June 16, 1887.

That the government of the country by the *literati* is at present the great obstacle to the introduction of Western notions and modes of life into China is acknowledged. We are naturally anxious that the vast empire of China should become Europeanised. It would be a good thing for the Chinese, *we say*; at all events, we are certain that a rapidly progressive China would afford an extensive market for the sale of our European goods. Mr. Boulger, who has made a profound study of China past and present, tells us that this desirable end cannot be attained so long as the empire retains its present mode of selecting its official class. The civil administration is now in the hands of a class composed, he says, of the mental aristocracy of the country; and while this undesirable state of things exists, there is no hope of real progress. 'Nor are the ruling powers blind to this. Various edicts have been published, and, what is more important, a disposition has been shown to employ officials in places of great trust and responsibility apart from their literary merit.'[1]

We can hardly doubt the conservative instincts of the scholar. Bold reformers find themselves in natural opposition to the learned. In China the great reforming Emperor Hoangti soon found himself engaged in a hot struggle with the *literati*; he did his best to suppress them, and went so far as to burn all their books, except such as treated of practical arts, like medicine and agriculture.[2] In Europe, where our learned men

[1] Article on 'The Future of China,' *Nineteenth Century*, August 1880.

[2] Boulger, *History of China*, vol. i. p. 74.

are for the most part confined to literature and science, there are ample traces of this conservative tendency: how hotly our universities resisted the advance of modernism, and clung to ancient studies and travelled the ancient roads! Do we not see what an obstacle to the progress of geometrical teaching is presented by the reverence of scholars for the venerable name of Euclid? It is well known that the magnificent achievements of Newton, when once they had been somewhat tardily acknowledged, checked for some generations the advance of mathematical studies in England, where it had become a point of honour to follow exclusively the methods of the great discoverer. When in highly progressive subjects the scholar's tendency to follow the beaten track manifestly asserts itself, can we doubt that in an unprogressive subject like ethics, of which politics is to a great extent a branch, this tendency would be even more obvious?

Let us strive to imagine what would have happened in England if the examination system of official selection had been introduced in its entirety—not of course twelve centuries ago as in China, for Europe was too barbarous at that remote epoch to possess sufficient knowledge, at least outside theology; but let us say that the reform which occurred under the Tang dynasty in China had been effected under the Stuarts in England. The first Stuart, somewhat of a scholar himself, actually made a little step towards Chinese notions by admitting university representatives—a recognition of learning which survives as an anomaly in our representative system, much deplored by advanced Radicals.

Suppose then that, instead of merely introducing a few learned representatives into Parliament, James I. and his line had succeeded in changing the national assembly into a Wittenagemot of the learned men of the country, and that he then placed the whole administration of England in the hands of a vast corporation trained in the knowledge of the ancients, like the 'Forest of Pencils,' as the Chinese call their body of graduates—can we doubt that a stationary condition would have ensued? Is it not almost certain that the march of progress would have been arrested, and that we should be all now engaged in laboriously marking time to the stately old music of Plato and Aristotle?

It seems desirable to examine somewhat closely the retarding influence of government by an intellectual aristocracy, more especially because a great authority, Sir Henry Maine, attributes Chinese unprogressiveness to some inherent limitation in the race. Progress, he says, seems to have been arrested in China because the civil laws are co-extensive with all the ideas of which the race is capable.[1] It is true that in a subsequent work our great jurist modified this statement. There must formerly have been a series of ages in which the progress of China was very steadily maintained, else it could not have attained the great and early culture it certainly did.[2] Doubtless our assumption of the absolute immobility of the Chinese and other societies is in part the expression of our ignorance. Still, the assumption of racial limits is so great, and it appears so completely unwarranted by the facts in the case of China,

[1] *Ancient Law*, p. 23. [2] *Early History of Institutions*, p. 227.

that it seems well to have pointed out another possible, and to me apparently obvious, explanation.

Although we may conclude that the rule of an intellectual aristocracy would be hostile to material progress, such a form of government may be favourable to the development of a considerable degree of individual liberty, and it certainly has been so in China.

The Chinese subject has, from ancient times, possessed privileges long unknown in Europe. There is no passport system ; he can travel where he pleases in the empire ; he can form and join any kind of association—there are innumerable *honi*, or corporations, for all sorts of purposes in China ; the liberty of the Press is unlimited, and the right of public meeting unquestioned.[1] The class of public readers is a very large and singular one according to European notions. These men wander about the empire reading and expounding passages from the philosophers and historians in the public places of the towns and villages. They are, for the most part, trained orators, and sometimes extremely eloquent ; listening to them is a favourite amusement with the populace, who manifest their approval of the efforts of the speaker by collections, which form the sole means of support of these public readers. The boldness of these men astonished Père Huc, who says : 'Nous sommes persuadés que certains peuples, très-avancés dans les idées libérales, seraient effrayés de voir s'introduire chez eux une coutume semblable.'[2] The means of forming and expressing public opinion are at hand, and public opinion is very powerful in China. It is one of the

[1] P. Girard, *France et Chine*, vol. i. chap. xiii. [2] *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 416.

gravest charges against a magistrate that he does not command the confidence of the people. In addition to all this, there is in China a degree of liberty of conscience unknown, and indeed impossible, in Europe until recent times.

Notwithstanding the modern look of much of this, there is abundant evidence of the sad effects of the arrest of social development. The punishments of criminals are of mediæval severity, and the condition of Chinese prisoners is perhaps more horrible than that of the Fleet debtors under Bambridge, or of the wretches in the common gaols before the days of Howard. However, while we shudder at the cruelty of Chinese magistrates, we should not forget that a criminal was boiled alive in Smithfield in the reign of Henry VIII.; that torture was legal in Scotland till the reign of Queen Anne; that a man was subjected to the atrocious punishment known as *peine forte et dure* in England as late as 1726; and that this, and the scarcely less brutal form of torture by tying the thumbs with whipcord, were only abolished by statute in the twelfth year of George III. (1772).

The long continuance of torture in our Western countries scarcely permits us to censure too harshly its maintenance in the Chinese Empire; more especially as the royal edict intended to abolish the practice in France, issued in the year 1780, indicates the reason of its long continuance as due to the reverence for traditional usages.[1] This feeling was strong enough in Europe, but it was inevitably the keynote of such a

[1] Lea, *Superstition and Force*, p. 520.

government as that of China. Torture was not finally got rid of in France till October 9, 1789, and then because the party which had broken with all traditions had become the dominant power in the State. In conservative Germany, though temporarily suppressed by the revolutionary movements under Napoleon, it was re-established after his fall,[1] and this odious trace of archaic ferocity continued to disgrace the laws of Baden till 1831. From time to time arise great men who suggest startling innovations, such as Sir Thomas More's proposal to abolish the punishment of death in cases of theft: 'I think it not right nor justice that the loss of money should cause the loss of man's life.' Three hundred years after the publication of More's 'Utopia,' in which these words occur, Romilly's almost timid attempts to reform the excessive and stupid severity of our criminal laws met a nearly unanimous rejection on the part of the men of precedent and usage, the lawyers of England. Lord Ellenborough protested against laws, which experience had proved to be necessary, being overturned by speculation and modern philosophy. Lord Eldon confessed that in early life he had felt some misgivings as to the justice of the criminal laws, before observation and experience had matured his judgment; he now, however, 'saw the wisdom of the principles and practices by which our criminal code was regulated.'[2]

It is quite obvious that the general mass of men, educated in special principles, will, with few exceptions,

[1] Lea, *Superstition and Force*, p. 517.

[2] Martineau, *History of the Peace*, vol. i. pp. 64 *et seq.* Ed. 1849.

cling to their old ideals, and reject the results of 'speculation and modern philosophy.' In proportion to the influence exercised on others by such classes will be both the resistance to change and the maintenance of ancient customs in different countries, as well as at different historic periods in the same country. Such considerations afford a far more reasonable explanation of the facts of survival of ancient customs up to certain dates, and their subsequent abandonment, than can be obtained from any modification, however ingenious, of the theory of inherited racial peculiarities. If we consider the fact of the long continuance of the practice of torture in France, in spite of the vain efforts of Montaigne and others to throw discredit on that atrocious system, and mark its final extinction by the revolutionary party, we see plainly enough that the fact is accounted for by the change of the ruling powers.[1] Again, torture was more cruelly and persistently employed in Scotland, particularly in witchcraft cases, than in most European countries; the revolutionary party under Oliver Cromwell abolished it, but the Royal Restoration witnessed its re-establishment. Would it not be in the last degree absurd to have recourse to any theory of instinctive conservatism in the Scotch 'race' to explain facts that were clearly due to the circumstance that power fell temporarily into the hands of men who had in a great degree broken with ancient traditions? Neither can we say that the fact of torture being legal in Baden till 1831 is proof of any conservative instinct in the Teutonic race.

[1] Lea, *Superstition and Force*, p. 510.

Before returning to the consideration of the curious kind of liberty enjoyed by the Chinese, it may be well to guard against a possible misunderstanding. It does not concern us to inquire whether the material progress denounced by Lin-Ta-Jen, Carlyle, Ruskin, Froude and other *literati*, is or is not the abomination they assert. Modern progress may be the fine thing described by 'the vulgarest of the flatterers' of the nineteenth century, or else we may be mere possessed swine rushing down a steep place, as Ruskin represents the progressive party of the present day. What does concern us is not the truth or falsehood of the opinion hostile to modern progress, but the fact that such an opinion is widely entertained by the cultured classes of both Europe and China. Mr. Froude, for instance, discoursing on 'Progress,' only echoes the sentiments of Lin-Ta-Jen on the same subject. This fundamental agreement is not accidental, but the result of looking at life from essentially the same standpoint; and all I wish to contend is, that if the government of England had been long ago handed over to the cultured class—had there been such—as was actually done in China, progress would have been checked with us, for good or for evil, as it has been with the Chinese.

A proof of the great antiquity of Chinese civilisation is the very modern tone of the political doctrines of their ancient philosophers. A maxim of the Emperor Hoangti, whose date is given by the annalists as about B.C. 2600, warns rulers against the multiplication of laws without necessity.[1] This principle was

[1] Girard, *France et Chine*, vol. i. p. 90.

much insisted on by Lao-tse: the wise ruler is to remember that a nation is a growth, not a manufacture, and that the spiritual weapons of this world cannot be formed by laws and regulations.[1] Prohibitory enactments, and too constant intermeddling in political and social matters, merely produce the evils they are intended to avert. The ruler is above all things to practise *Woŭ-wei*, or non-action.[2] This does not mean absolute inaction, but rather the absence of excessive activity, or over-legislation. The principles of that very recent school of politicians combated by Professor Huxley in his essay 'Administrative Nihilism' add little to this teaching of the Chinese philosophers of two thousand five hundred years ago.

How thoroughly these lessons were accepted by the Chinese *literati* is shown by the determined resistance they offered to the socialistic movement under the Emperor Chintsong II., a contemporary of William the Conqueror. Chintsong ascended the imperial throne at a very early age, and soon fell under the influence of Wauganchi, a man of great attainments, the compiler of a vast encyclopædia. This remarkable personage conceived the idea of a great social revolution. 'The State,' he declared, 'should take the entire management of commerce, industry and agriculture into its own hands, with the view of succouring the working classes and preventing their being ground to the dust by the rich.'[3] The poor were to be exempt from taxa-

[1] Douglas, *Confucianism*, p. 198.
[2] Professor De Harlez, article in *Dublin Review* quoted above.
[3] Boulger, *History of China*, vol. i. p. 400.

tion, land was to be assigned to them, and seed corn provided. Every one was to have a sufficiency, there were to be no poor and no over-rich. The *literati* in vain resisted the innovations, the fallacy of which they demonstrated from their standpoint. The specious arguments of the would-be reformer convinced the young emperor and gained the favour of the people. Wauganchi triumphed. The vast province of Shensi was chosen as the theatre for the display of the great social experiment that was to regenerate mankind. The result was failure, complete and disastrous. The people, neither driven by want, nor incited by the hope of gain, ceased to labour; and the province was soon in a fair way to become a desert. The result was so plain that popular opinion shifted to the side of the philosophers, and the experiment tried eight centuries ago decided the fate of socialistic theories in China.

In other respects, the political teaching of the venerable Lao-tse was coincident with the most modern views[1]: everything for the people, and everything by the people, is the maxim of his very undespotic government. The principle that the interests of the governed were in every case to be preferred to those of the rulers was clearly and emphatically expressed by Confucius, and by his follower and interpreter, Mencius. 'The people,' said Mencius, 'are the most important element in the country—and the ruler is the least.'[2] The European mediævalists, from whose influence our minds are only partially freed, held the opposite doctrine.

[1] Professor Douglas, *Confucianism*, p. 179. [2] *Ibid.* p. 155.

The Chinese moralists taught that it is the duty of the people to obey the emperor, but only so long as he obeys the moral law. 'From time immemorial it has been held by the highest constitutional authorities, by Confucius and Mencius among the rest, that the obligations existing between the emperor and his people are mutual; and that, though it is the duty of the people to render a loyal and willing obedience to the emperor so long as his rule is just and beneficent, it is equally incumbent on them to resist his authority, to depose him, and even to put him to death, should he desert the paths of rectitude and virtue.'[1] 'May a subject put a ruler to death?' asked King Senen of Mencius. 'He who outrages benevolence,' answered the philosopher, 'is called a ruffian; and he who outrages righteousness is called a villain. The ruffian and villain we call a mere fellow. I have heard of the cutting off of the *fellow* Show (the last emperor of the Thang dynasty); but I have not heard of a *ruler* being put to death.'[2] Such were the opinions as to the obligations of rulers which Mencius, a contemporary of Aristotle, derived from the study of the writings of more ancient sages. Long centuries afterwards the imperial philosopher Julian arrived at pretty much the same result, when he acknowledged that the emperor was bound to obey the law.

The Chinese were not content that such phrases should remain a mere *brutum fulmen*; they tried to answer in a practical way the old question, *Quis cus-*

[1] Professor Douglas, *China*, p. 47.

[2] Professor Douglas, *Confucianism*, p. 155.

*todiet ipsos custodes*? and their solution is remarkable enough to deserve a little consideration.

To enforce the obedience of the magistrates of the empire to the laws as propounded by the throneless king, Confucius, and his followers, there are two singular institutions, the College of Censors and the Tribunal of History. Both these bodies are selected from the most distinguished of the graduates at the State examinations.[1] A member of the redoubtable College of Censors is seated at the tribunal of every high court of justice; he takes no part in the proceedings; his duty is to observe everything in silence, and to report on any breach of propriety to the College or the emperor himself. The College is alike vigilant as to the conduct of the emperor: it is the duty of the Censor to remonstrate with his Celestial Majesty on any observed breach of morality or justice. The strictures of the Censor addressed to the emperor are secret; if the official disclose them to any subject he incurs the penalty of death; still the visits of the Censor are said to be a terror to an evil-doing emperor, who on his part is bound to respect the life of his daring critic. If the visit of the Censor gives a twinge to the conscience of the erring emperor, the Tribunal of History, a branch of the Academy of Han-Lin, reminds him that his ill-deeds are being chronicled as a warning to all future ages. We are told that Chinese history is full of examples of the boldness with which the members of this tribunal exercise their office. Taitsong the Great (A.D. 627–650) asked the President of the Tribunal of

[1] Girard, *France et Chine*, vol. i. pp. 398 *et seq.*

History to show him what had been written about his reign. The President refused, saying, 'I do not know that any emperor has ever seen what is written about him.' 'But,' said Taitsong, 'supposing I did nothing good, or that I happened to commit some bad action, is it you, President, who would write it down?' 'Prince, I should be overwhelmed with grief; but, being entrusted with a charge so important as that of presiding over the Tribunal of the Empire, could I dare to be wanting in my duty?'[1] A Chinese tyrant once ordered the execution of all the members of the Tribunal of History, but the entire Forest of Pencils were ready to assume the office of historiographers, so that the deeds and character of the despot were duly chronicled for the detestation of mankind.

We are told that these institutions are beneficial to a considerable extent; still greed leads to official extortion and peculation, and the strong class feeling of the governing order tends to shelter offenders in spite of Censors and Historians.

The Chinese subject enjoys, as we have seen, a considerable amount of personal freedom in some respects, while he is much restricted in others. We are told that the Chinese are so accustomed to State interference in the minutest details of private life that they have lost or have not yet developed the sense of personal independence.[2] Be that as it may, it is clear that, outside of the moral code of the five relationships, great liberty of action and still greater freedom of opinion and expres-

[1] Boulger, vol. i. p. 3.

[2] Stanford, *Compendium of Geography and Travel:* 'Asia,' p. 599.

sion is permitted to Chinamen. This contrast is what might be expected under the government of a scholastic class bigotedly attached to a system of morals and politics such as that of Confucius and his followers. The insistence on the controlling power of popular opinion, and the respect due to it, is too clearly and strongly expressed in their texts to be altogether ignored; but in other matters the hide-bound spirit of mere pedants, pondering over the phrases of their 'holy doctrine,' becomes everywhere manifest.

Whatever may be the degree of personal liberty enjoyed by the Chinese—and very different views are expressed as to its amount—it has a different origin from that of the new-born liberties of the West. With us popular freedom is in every way associated with the growth of trading activities, while the freedom of the Chinese depends on the teachings of a philosophy in every way hostile to trading activities.

Ancient philosophers, whether in China or Europe, in the main agreed that man is happy in proportion as his wants are few. Everything that ministers to artificial needs, and by its ministration increases those needs, is in that sense in itself hurtful. Moderation in his desires, says his Excellency Lin, is wealth to the Chinaman; the pursuit of any other form of riches is a moral error. Pliny, thinking of that happy time before men learnt, in pursuit of mineral treasures, to outrage their mother earth by delving and burrowing beneath her fair surface, bursts into an expression of longing regret for the simple happiness of the vanished golden age: 'Quam innocens, quam beata, immo vero et delicata esset

vita, si nihil aliunde, quam supra terras, concupisceret; breviterque, nisi quod secum est!'[1]

Such ideas did not render the pets of the modern Liberal—the intelligent artisan and the industrious trader—favourites with the philosophers of antiquity. Plato described the whole class of artisans as self-sufficient and foolish: 'But I observed that good artisans fell into the same error as the poets; because they were good workmen they thought that they also knew all sorts of high matters.'[2] Artisans and traders pursued occupations devoid of moral excellence, according to Aristotle, and both he and Plato would exclude them from the rights of citizenship. The Chinese philosophers, starting from the same principles, arrived at the same conclusion. The learned and able emperor Keen Lung,[3] who had been trained as one of the *literati*, expresses in a political poem the sentiments of Plato and Aristotle: 'As to artisans and those who traffic and trade, one ought to think them unworthy of considera-

[1] *Hist. Nat.* lib. xxxiii. c. 1

[2] *Apology*, Jowett's Plato, vol. i. p. 356.

[3] Keen Lung is an interesting and important figure in Chinese history. Coming to the Imperial throne unexpectedly at the age of twenty-five, and believing that his previous life, devoted to the earnest study of literature, did not fit him well for the discharge of duties he would not consent to undertake lightly, he voluntarily placed himself under the tutelage of a council of able statesmen for four years, during which time he hoped to gain, and did gain, a practical knowlege of what was required from the ruler of a vast empire. His reign lasted for sixty-one years (1735–1796), and was terminated by a voluntary abdication when he found that his great age incapacitated him from governing according to the standard he had set before his mind. He was a voluminous writer during his scanty leisure, and some of his poems translated into French received, and perhaps deserved, the praises of Voltaire.

tion: they have no rank; they form the lowest order of the nation.'[1]

The contempt for artisans and traders expressed by the thinkers of Greece, Rome, and China is not to be confounded with the hatred and scorn of the industrial classes entertained by barbarians, such as the Jarls of Scandinavia felt for the Thraels, or 'the noble knights and acute philosophers' of Molême for 'the vile slaves' engaged in 'servile and unbeseeming pursuits.' The innocent and necessary employment of agriculture was held in high honour by the philosophers. This respect for this one form of toil is clearly expressed in China: an ordinance of the emperor Yung-Chin directs the governors of departments in the empire to forward to Pekin every year the name of the most deserving peasant, farmer, or labourer in his district.[2] The individual so selected receives the high honour of nomination to the rank of Mandarin of the eighth class (there are eighteen classes of Mandarins). Thus the industrious peasant, considered in mediæval Europe only in the light of a fit subject for pillage, has been long thought in China to deserve a rank about equivalent to that of our Privy Councillors—a practical recognition of the laudations poured on the life of the agriculturist by Cicero and other ancient moralists.

Philosophic contempt of trade did not then proceed from a dislike of industry as such, but of industry as applied to the mere increase of wealth and development of luxury, which were considered moral dangers of the gravest kind. The hatred of the barbarians for the in-

[1] Girard, *France et Chine*, vol. i. p. 157. [2] *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 156.

dustrial classes was different, and resulted from the notion of caste superiority, contempt for the feeble, and the desire of the wealth created by the labour of others without themselves undergoing painful toil. The doctrines of the ancient philosophers of Europe were mere opinions in the air, and that air was by no means the atmosphere breathed by the vulgar world around them. Plato in the 'Theætetus' makes Socrates complain how absurd the ordinary man and the philosopher appeared each to the other. Greek traders, and Roman patricians whose influence in great part rested on wealth gained by usury—a practice hateful to every teacher of the ancient world—were not the fitting recipients of doctrines teaching contempt of riches and hatred of ostentation. Unphilosophical human nature everywhere honours wealth and desires to possess it, or at least the influence which the reputation of being rich confers.

The philosophers of China, in the common struggle against the popular worship of Mammon, had an advantage not accorded to those of Greece and Rome: they became the virtual rulers of the great Empire of the East. The vulgar epithet of Confucius, 'throneless king,' is in China no empty title. If the thinkers of ancient Europe had attained the authority yielded to their fellows in the Far East, there seems to be little room for doubt that practical men would be now as clamorous in Western countries as they are in China against the rule of theorists and faddists—men following visionary aims and despising the plain lessons of day-book and ledger.

I have insisted on these matters at considerable length because the current explanation of the stationary

condition of China is derived from the purely mischievous theories of race now current among us. It is quite clear that China was at one time highly progressive. The Chinese invented the mariner's compass and the great art of printing; they built large ships; they dug canals and made great roads, and constructed stupendous bridges; and they got rid of feudalism—and all this ages before such advances were dreamt of in the West. Yet the race, *as a race*, is pronounced unprogressive. One of the beauties of race theory is its elasticity. So we are told that the Chinese were progressive up to a certain point. Historically true! But we are then told that it belongs to the Chinese nature to progress up to that point and no further; that there is a natural limit to Chinese progress, just as Galileo taught there was a limit to Nature's abhorrence of a vacuum, and that when they reached that limit they ceased to progress, as the water ceased to rise in the pump. We are to be pronounced unphilosophical if we consider that China has been bound hand and foot for twelve centuries under the rule of a class unprogressive in every part of the world; or if we hold that, wherever and whenever in Europe somewhat similar bodies have possessed influence, material progress is very generally in inverse proportion to the amount of that influence!

We used to be told that the kindred Japanese[1] were

[1] This essay was written in 1887. Since then momentous changes have taken place. The judgment of a man of acknowledged ability, formed with the aid of these more recent experiences, strongly confirms Mr. Babington's view. In the number of *The Cosmopolitan* for February 1895 Lord Wolseley writes: 'When I visited Yeddo and the ports of Japan in the winter of 1860–61 the country was ruled upon the most ex-

another stationary people, and no account was taken of the fact that they, too, were under an unprogressive form of government, the rule of the Daimios, a form of that feudalism through which almost all nations have passed, and under which none have progressed. The Japanese burst their bonds, as it seems the Chinese are now inclined to do, and they became suddenly and almost feverishly progressive.

It is not worth while seeking to inquire what explanation race theorists can endeavour to give of such facts.

clusive Japanese methods. The people were held in subjection by an hereditary nobility who ruled them with a rod of iron. They were then far behind China in all matters connected with sea power, for in order to prevent any communication with foreign places all Japanese junks were, in accordance with the law, constructed with low, open sterns, so that they dared not venture beyond a few miles from shore. Besides, whilst the Chinaman had always been a good sailor, the Japanese never had been so. There was then nothing apparent to the foreign traveller in Japan which foretold the serious changes in political constitution and system of government which were impending. . . . It is a most amazing reformation and change from a condition of impotence into one of greatness and power.'

Of China Lord Wolseley writes: 'She possesses—in my humble opinion—every essential for national greatness, though at this present moment she seems to lack the power to organise and properly mould and direct the energy of her vast population. . . . I can see no limit to the size of the army she could raise; and, according to my estimate of the fighting qualities of her men, I think it ought soon to be the first army in the world.'—Ed.

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